

THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

NOVEMBER 1890.

EIGHT DAYS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE TOUCHSTONE OF PERIL.'

I will a round unvarnished tale deliver.—*Othello.*

CHAPTER XII.

UNDER THE MOONLIGHT.

As the sound of the evening gun dies away through the now once more cool fresh atmosphere, there is a continuous clatter of hoofs, and roll of wheels, and flashing of lamps along the Mall: for the whole station is flocking to Melvil Hall to-night.

Mr. Melvil was very hospitable, and he was fond of social display, and he liked to please the ladies. During the cold season he gave many balls and picnics—dinners all the year round. The thermometer, of course, marks no degree of temperature at which girls will not dance—they would dance in the fiery furnace; but there are older people, and so in the months between May and October dances were very rare in Khizrabad. It was with as much surprise as delight that the girls had seen the word 'Dancing' on Mr. Melvil's cards of invitation for this evening.

There has been a big dinner; the men have not yet risen from table, for little old Brigadier Moss and big, stout, jolly-faced Colonel Barnes like to linger over their cigar. But the ladies have retired, and the drawing-room is crowded, for most of the post-dinner guests have arrived, the married people from their homes and the unmarried men from their messes—the young fellows with their pink-and-white English faces, and the old boys with their

brown-and-yellow Indian ones. There are men enough to prevent that after-dinner period from being as dull for the ladies as it usually is. But still there is a dulness about. All the unmarried girls and most of the married women—who like India because they get so much dancing there—are depressed by the thought that there may be no dancing after all. This spacious apartment is the one generally used for dances, and there are no signs of preparation. True, Mr. Melvil's army of servants could remove even this vast array of furniture in a very short time. But the room is filled with costly articles, rare vases and objects of art, which Mr. Melvil could never desire to be moved in a hurry; and, above all, the floor has not been prepared, the carpet is still down. That seems decisive. Here are all the spinsters of the station gathered together, under this one long punkah—Beatrice and Lilian Fane, and Maud and Agnes Hilton, and May Wynn, and Miss Lyster.

'I am afraid there is to be no dancing after all,' says Lilian Fane, in a most doleful voice.

'The word "Dancing" may have been left on the cards by mistake,' remarks another. There are general expressions of sorrow, even from the heavy-hearted Maud Hilton, who had looked forward to the dance as a welcome distraction. To those not knowing, the lamentation of Miss Lyster, the withered old-maid, might have seemed affected; but it was not so. (Miss Lyster, it will be remembered, is she who for years has had charge of an invalid mother, a mysterious mother whom no one has ever seen.) Though her face has not upon it the brightness that rests on those of her much younger companions—though it is not, like theirs, illumined by hope, but darkened by disappointment, darkened by the shadow of a life un-lived, natural powers not put to use, the gifts of nature wasted—yet it still retains its beauty of feature, its fine expression. Sadness, and sorrow, and the burden of her home-life, and the ill-health that comes of an unnatural mode of existence, as an unmarried life is, had robbed her figure of its fulness, but not of its elegance, had not diminished its graceful carriage. She was a beautiful dancer, and she never had any lack of partners; and she was very fond of a dance; it brought some brightness into her life. We all like to have a little pleasure. Besides, in a ball-room her old-maidenship was forgotten, and not the youngest or fairest girl could out-ival her there.

Great is the regret among the young men too. Tommy

Walton, the 'Babe,' is almost frantic. He has been looking forward to the dance, not only for its own sake, but as a grand opportunity for carrying out a most important purpose of his own.

The disappointment extends to the married ladies too: there is hardly one among them there who does not dance. Mrs. Hilton, most certainly, is not the one: she has not given up dancing because her daughters have come out, she does not give in to that doctrine.

But now the men come trooping in from the dining-room; and when Mr. Melvil, after having saluted the guests whom he has not seen before, says, 'We will have our coffee out-of-doors,' and leads the way into the splendid verandah which runs along the back of the house, they perceive that he has intended that the delight of surprise should be added to all the other delights of the entertainment he has prepared for them. Suddenly a bright illumination spreads over the grounds before them, and soon they present a fairy-like spectacle: the bright lights twinkle along the winding walks and upon the terraces, and are reflected in the waters of the lake. The verandah opens on to that rare and much prized adornment of a bungalow in those latitudes, a broad smooth lawn, only kept green by constant diligent watering. Surrounding the lawn were majestic trees, and as these were hung with various-coloured Chinese lanterns—green, and blue, and red, and yellow—it seemed as if one had suddenly brought before one the gardens into which Aladdin made his way by means of his wonderful lamp, where the trees were hung—instead of with oranges, or apples, or pears—with gigantic gems, rubies and emeralds and amethysts. A splendid tamarind-tree stood a little way within the edge of the lawn, and this presented a gorgeous spectacle, every single branch being closely hung with lanterns—there is nothing more beautiful than the play of the red of fire on the stems and amid the foliage of trees—and under this carpets had been spread, and easy-chairs and little tables laid out. What a delightful out-of-door drawing-room! And at one side of the lawn stands a long refreshment-table with its crowd of dark-faced attendants in their robes of snowy whiteness. Here fruits and dainty cakes, and ices, and tea and coffee, and claret-cup, and champagne-cup, and what many preferred to either, the wholesome and refreshing brandy and soda, were to be had in superfluous abundance all the night long. And there in a circle stands the famous band of the 3rd Grenadiers ready to discourse sweet

music. How delightful to pass the evening out in the open air, with its ever-increasing coolness and sweetness, rather than in a heated room with its ever-augmenting heat! How delightful to recline in these easy seats listening to the music!—think the older people. How delightful to wander about the grounds listening to the music!—think the younger. Tommy Walton nearly shouts with joy. He can now carry out his project.

Had Mr. Melvil done no more than this for the entertainment of his guests he would have done enough. But he has done more. The large dancing-cloth usually used in the drawing-room had been spread in the middle of the lawn—the grass of which was much shorter than that of an English lawn—and tightly stretched and securely pegged down. There is to be dancing after all.

And now the sounds of a pretty waltz are sounding through the soft still air, and eager couples are hastening to the cloth—which in the midst of the big lawn looks so much smaller than it really is—and have put it to trial, and pronounced the arrangement perfect. Round and round the joyous couples go. They abandon themselves to the music, to its rise and fall, in all-forgetting dreamy joyfulness. Now they descend the smooth liquid slope and now are upborne by the softly rising wave. Life has become cadenced, rhythmical. They are wafted along on the wings of music. It is a trance-like ecstasy. They have passed away from the earth into dreamland—fairyland.

It is delightful to wander along the illuminated garden-paths and listen to the music, made sweeter by the distance; delightful to do so by oneself, or in the company of a friend, preferably one of the opposite sex. These joys are open to the few of the older ladies who do not dance, to the many men who do not do so either, or who cannot find partners: for, as was usual then in India, the men are greatly in excess. And for those whom such amusements pleased not others were provided. Card-tables had been set out in the long illuminated verandah. In one of the lower rooms, built up from the bottom of the declivity on the edge of which one end of the house rested, as already noted, was a billiard-table, which was now lighted up. There was amusement for all. And, as Major Coote—the great *shikaree* (or hunter), the slayer of ibex and ovis-ammon on the lofty summits of the Himalayas, and of tiger and buffaloes in the low swamps of Bengal, who is just now commanding the 76th—observed, ‘Merely to escape the heat and after-dinner tedium of the drawing-room’ (he was not

a ladies' man) 'and to sit out in the open air, smoking one of Melvil's excellent havannahs' (he did not care for the music), 'was in itself a most unexpected and delightful pleasure.'

And so the moments pass by in quiet or vivid enjoyment.

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gorgeously and splendidly as then, is still very beautifully and more tenderly clad, when the sunlight is more tempered and distance lends its magic to the scene, when the river winds its way through the valley in many silver streams : but you should not come on a day like the one just past, when the earth is utterly bare, disrobed, when the brown fields spread a horrid fallow, when the grass is withered and yellow, and the pools dry, and the reeds and rushes dead, and the trees dust-laden, and the earth trembles with the heat, and everything seen looks hard and dry in the desiccated atmosphere, and the fierce excessive sunshine obliterates all distance, and the shrunk stream meanders though a wide waste of glimmering, glittering sand. At this evening hour, however, the wide shallow valley of the river is not made harshly visible by the bright incandescent sunshine, but tenderly veiled by the as yet pale silvery light of the but lately risen moon.

As they take their stand beneath the cupola there falls on their ears the trembling mellow vibration of the great gong which hangs above the main gateway of the palace-fortress in the city, above the Gate Magnificent. This great gong proclaims the passing hours to-day as it has done for many a century past. Its vibrations link the present with the past. A continuous chain of sound runs through the history of Khizrabad. This huge gong had been placed above the gateway when the gateway was first built. It had formed part of the first furnishing of the palace-fortress. It had rung out the hours that first day it was swung and every day since : in the darkness of the night and the brightness of the day ; during the still calm days and in the days of storm ; in the days of Khizrabad's pride and prosperity and in the days of her humiliation and sorrow. Its sound had formed an integral part of the existence, awakened one of the sensations that constituted the lives, of the people of Khizrabad from the first. Lennox remembers this, and it gives him something to speak about, affords him relief from the stress of his own feelings. The last mellow vibration of the great disc of sonorous metal has died away on their listening ears.

'It is strange to think of that gong having measured out the lives of so many generations of men. It was put up when the city was founded. It formed part of the original furnishing of the palace. It has measured out the history of the Nuwâbs of Khizrabad, the whole length of the lives of every one of them except the first one, the man who had it cast.'

'It measured out my childhood too,' says May softly; 'I was born here, and did not go home until I was eight years old. The sound of this gong, and the firing of the gun on the ridge, and the voice of the muezzin calling from the top of the minarets, are the earliest sounds that I can remember.'

'I shall listen to it with the deeper interest now,' says Lennox.

Though strictly true, what foolish, feeble words!—with what a shallow, artificial ring—a sort of speech that any partner of May's, coming here with her after a dance, would have felt himself bound to make. They are not his own words, not in accord with the strong emotion working within him. But how shall he clothe that emotion in words? Thus thinks Lennox. And then he hurries on:

'The curious thing is that the gong has been rung during all these years by men of the same family in strict succession of father and son.'

'Without any break?' says May.

'Yes.' And then:

'What a fine sound the gong has!'

'Yes.'

But that forced talk cannot be maintained any longer.

'My God! how I love you!' says Lennox.

Now it is himself that speaks. She trembles.

They were standing close together against the parapet-wall, looking out over towards the river, their faces to the fast brightening moonlight.

'Do you really love me, May?' he asks in a low deep whisper.

She looks up at him. The moonlight falls upon her face, upon her soft grey eyes: they convey her answer. His arm is put around her waist; he draws her to him, holds her tight; their lips meet in one long, close, unhurried kiss.

Friends! let us look for the joys of Heaven, but they are sometimes anticipated on this earth.

They gaze away into the distance, but they see not the silver-filled air. They are blind with emotion. They are deaf. They hear not the sound of the music on the lawn where the dancers are dancing in tune. They are breathless. They are in a swoon of joy.

'It is very wonderful! I can hardly believe it. Do you really love me?' he asks after a while, when his senses have come back to him.

‘Yes,’ she whispers softly.

‘You do not know what this means to me,’ he says. ‘There comes over me a feeling of infinite satisfaction and rest. My warfare with myself is ended. What that warfare may mean to a man no woman can tell. A loveless life is a sad, a cruel life. I have known many able men whose career has been marred for want of love; not finding that everything else seemed valueless; ambition lost its charm; they cared not for success; they ceased to work or strive. Happy the man who marries early! His whole life is then before him to enjoy, to make glorious. Otherwise it will creep along on broken wing. He will move along the road of life weak and staggering like a starving man. Let that deep hunger of the soul be satisfied and he will move along it with strong, joyous footsteps. Then will he have full command of his powers and be able to put them to fullest use. Man and woman are the two wings on which life rises to its fullest height.’

Lennox was not a man of words. This speech both for its length and style might have seemed strange to many of his friends. It may seem strange for a man in his present position. But his official work had taught him to formulate his thoughts, to put them into sentences. These were the thoughts of years which had clothed themselves in a set form of words. He now said aloud what he had often said to himself. He was speaking of what he had himself felt.

‘I may be generalising from my own case,’ he goes on, and his continuing to speak shows how much the subject has dwelt in his thoughts. ‘But that is how I have thought and felt myself. I have been very fortunate. I have got exactly what I wanted. I have had the rule of a large district, the independent rule. I have had autocratic power—or taken it,’ he adds with a little laugh. ‘I have been a little king. You know on what a pinnacle one is set in such a position with reference to the people about one. I have raised and drilled an army of my own, and led it and taught it to fight. These are the things I had desired and dreamed of from my youth upwards. I have had an income far beyond my wants. And yet I tell you that in the midst of all this I have often envied one of my own servants. When I have seen him in possession of his own little home and with his wife and children about him, I have thought him more fortunate than myself—his life more full and complete and satis-

factory. How I have hungered for love!—you must give me plenty of it.'

'All,' she whispers.

And then she asks him how he came to love her, when, and why. And then comes the pretty lovers' talk, and the moon is sailing across the heavens and the river speeding by.

But they cannot remain here all night. As they hasten back they meet, or pass, many a couple wandering along the cool, fragrant pathways. And in one enchanted spot, where there is a dense growth of plantains, with their huge leaves, so beautiful in shape and colour, and where the pupita upholds on its slender stem its beautiful coronal of leaves, and where there is many another tree of graceful stem and beautiful foliage, they came face to face with Beatrice Fane and William Hay. And if an oriental writer would have said that verily here was paradise (*peri-des*, the land of the peris, a celestial dwelling-place) he would also have added that truly here were two of its celestial occupants—even orientals hold the white skin the more beautiful: whiteness is celestial, blackness infernal. William Hay is a 'fair' man in every sense of the term; his good looks rise to the height of beauty. And as Beatrice Fane stands there with the now vivid moonlight falling full on her golden hair, on her snowy-skinned beautiful face, on her downward-flowing snowy robes, her stately, beautiful figure, verily she does look like a celestial being, like 'a daughter of the gods.' And the two men, bound together by ties of relationship, bound together by the still closer ties, the hooks of steel, of true friendship, exchange one of those soul-full looks which are so rare, at all events among Englishmen. His cousin and friend's engagement has filled William Hay with delight, for he too knew what was wanting in Lennox's lofty but somewhat harsh life. That engagement has done what Hay thought could not be done—added to his own present felicity.

'How supremely happy he looks, and how much gentler!' says Hay, as he and Beatrice Fane move on along their way. 'Do you remark how the very tone of his voice has become gay and light, less harsh?'

'She looks very happy too,' says Beatrice.

'It makes one very happy,' says Hay, and then they go off into that delightful foolishness of lovers which can no more bear recording than love-letters can bear being read out in a court of law. And Lennox and May Wynn smile at one another, as, going

the other way and brushing by a leafy bower, their ears are greeted from its hidden depths by a sudden 'Hush! hush!' in a childish silvery treble they knew very well.

For into the innermost recesses of that bower had young Walton conducted the pretty Lilian Fane, after having danced three successive delightful dances with her. 'There was no reason why they should not do so,' Mr. Walton had protested; 'this is not a regular ball.'

The seat placed in the arbour was a judiciously small one. It held only two, and those two must sit very close together: in immediate contiguity. The light of the Chinese lantern played picturesquely on the broad leaves of the giant creeper with which the bower was overgrown. He is looking hard at her, she is looking coyly down.

'Don't sit on the top of me, please!' she exclaims without looking up, as he makes a movement on the seat, and still further diminishes the very small interval of space between them.

'The bench is so small!' he exclaims, still keeping his gaze upon her.

'Then why not stand up?'

But the suggestion is not acted upon—neither to her surprise nor her distress. But she must still continue to tease him with it.

'It would be better for my dress.'

'I am not hurting your dress,' he says, putting back the delicate fabric a little with reverential fingers. He moves his legs away a little too, and this brings his head and shoulders still nearer to hers. In order to preserve his balance—physical, all other is lost—he has to place his right arm along the back of the seat close behind the pearly uncovered shoulders. There is a brief space of silence. Then, swayed by the inherited impulse of ages, she, as if unconscious that the arm was there, though knowing very well that it was there, leans back against it for a moment of ineffable bliss to the owner; and then she lifts herself up again and assumes an upright attitude of rigid propriety.

'You are tired of sitting here,' she says.

'You know I am not,' he says, angrily. His angry tone causes a little smile to play about her rosy mouth.

The alabaster shoulders, the white swan-like neck, the sweet cheek on which still lingers the rosy tint of her native land, and the beautiful curves that run between it and the neck (that most

beautiful, though rarely noticed, feature of a beautiful face), how distractingly near they all are to his eyes, to his lips! How very near to his lips! At any other time he would have yielded to the almost irresistible temptation and pleaded infancy, but just now he is more desirous of putting forward his manhood than his boyhood. And so he withdraws from the temptation, removes his arm from its dangerous position, and sits up.

Lilian's pretty little hands are lying in her lap. An artist in words might have made something out of the contrast between the white patch of moonlight and the white of the dress, and of the gloves, and of the white arms above. But Mr. Walton's eyes are rather attracted by a little bit of pink colour on one of the upturned hands.

'You have torn one of your gloves,' he says.

'Yes, this one has burst,' she replies, as she lifts up the hand and holds it before his face.

The 'Babe' puts his gloved left hand under the upheld hand to support it, and then with the forefinger of his ungloved right hand he tenderly touches the soft little pink protuberance. That completes the current: he feels a sudden electrical shock. Lilian too experiences a curious tingle and thrill.

'It has broken here,' says poor Tommy, in a helpless kind of way.

Those shocks are very paralysing.

'I see that,' says Lilian, demurely.

He keeps the tip of his forefinger on the now uncovered portion of the ball of her thumb.

'Quite a big tear,' he says.

Then the fingers of his left hand, hitherto held out straight, experience a sudden closing movement, as the leaf of the sensitive plant curls up when you touch it.

'Please let go my hand.'

'Will you give it to me?'

'Give you one of my hands!'

'You know very well what I mean. Will you marry me—be my wife—Mrs. Walton?'

On the round, good-humoured face of the Babe is a look of solemnity, of portentous seriousness, that would have made you laugh.

'Marry you! Why, you are only a boy.'

'A boy! I am over nineteen.'

'That is not very old.'

'Three years older than you are.'

'It is different with a woman.'

'And I do not want to marry just yet. We should have to wait a little to make arrangements—about the furniture and all that, you know,' says the Babe.

'But you are supposing——' And she tries to withdraw her hand, but he imprisons it between both his own.

'And I shall work hard and pass in the languages,' he goes on, eagerly. 'You think I am always laughing and joking; but I can be serious too, and I have considered the matter most seriously. My people have a good deal of interest, and will be able to get me on to the Staff, or into the Commissariat Department, or into the Public Works Department, or the Political Department, or the Punjab Commission. May I speak to Major Fane to-morrow?'

'People would laugh at us: would laugh at a boy like you being engaged to be married.'

'Let them! May I speak to your father to-morrow?'

'But you are supposing—— I—do—not—know—that—I—myself——'

'You said the other day that you liked me very much.'

'So I do—in that way.'

'And I love you so, Miss Fane—Lilian!'

'Hush! hush!' she cries, as there is the sound of a footstep, of a strong, firm, regular footstep—it is that of Philip Lennox—on the little secluded pathway that runs by the side of the bower. It dies away.

'I love you so'—he takes up the tale again.

More footsteps.

'Feefteen per cent., mon! Mair like feefty! The rod to wealth is open to ye, mon!'

The voice is that of Dr. Brodie, Lilian's ancient wooer, the old man who had made her the same proposal the young lad is making her now. He is standing at the very door. Lilian gives a start; she can hardly restrain a little cry, a laugh. It would be too absurd for her sixty-year-old lover and her nineteen-year-old lover to come face to face at such a moment as this. The circumstances of the first proposal, so very different from this, flash up before her. That Dr. Brodie should tumble in upon them now! But he has moved away. And then Lilian jumps up and makes for

the door, and has reached it ere the Babe can stop her: but he detains her there. The pathway is now empty.

'You have not yet said "yes."'

'I shall be late for the dance—the music has commenced.'

'It does not take long to say "yes."'

'Or to say "no."'

'You would not say that.'

'Perhaps'—and then, seeing the look on his face: 'Perhaps not. But I cannot say either now.'

The sound of footsteps—the rustle of dresses—voices and laughter. The errant couples are hastening quickly back. Lilian too begins to move along the pathway.

'You will let me know to-morrow then,' he whispers eagerly, as he walks by her side. Other couples are coming up behind them.

'Not to-morrow—I must have that to think over it. You are so young. People will laugh,' she continues, when the quick walking couples have gone by.

'Let them,' he repeats. 'We shall be so happy together, Lilian! Then the day after?'

'No, not the day after. That will be Sunday,' she says, when they have got by the breaking-up and re-forming couples. They themselves are now moving quickly on. The young fellow has not time to argue.

'Then on Monday,' he says; 'Monday for certain.'

'Very well—yes.'

'And you will say "yes." You would not have the heart to say "no."'

'We will see.' They are now at the very edge of the lawn; she gives him an arch, mischievous look, but there is tenderness in it too, and he plucks up heart of hope.

The moon is now in the zenith, and is pouring her silver light straight down on the lawn. The enjoyment is there at its height. The increasing coolness enables the joyous couples to throw themselves even more vigorously into the delights of this novel dancing on the green. The soft music floats about. There is a fragrance of tobacco in the air. The cool cups are quaffed. While the dancers are footing it on the cloth, the whist-players are intent on their tricks and their honours in the verandah. Friendly groups are conversing.

One such group is composed of the three officers commanding

the three regiments, of Colonel Barnes, Colonel Grey, and Major Coote—of Mr. and Mrs. Hilton, and their host, Mr. Melvil. They have been talking about the troubled spirit in the native army, due to the issue of the greased cartridges, about the seditious placard which had appeared on the walls of the mosque. Mr. Hilton, now a non-official, finds himself as it were between the hammer and the anvil. Mr. Melvil resists him violently if he hints a civil commotion, the others come down on him heavily when he expresses a dread of a military mutiny. He takes a pessimist view of the aspect of affairs; they an optimist. If he had been an ordinary commercial man—a pekin—they would have extinguished him with a snub. (That estrangement between the non-official and official classes in India is very unfortunate. The former have a far more close and free and familiar intercourse with the natives, and consequently a more correct and extensive knowledge of their thoughts and feelings. They watch the money market, that most sensitive barometer.) But Mr. Hilton has been one of themselves, and they listen to him, even though they do not agree with him, and his sayings please them not.

‘We shall know the result of the court-martial on those men of the 3rd Cavalry to-morrow,’ says Mr. Hilton. ‘I hope they have been severely dealt with. The trial has now lasted more than a month. They should have been tried by a drum-head court-martial and shot the very same day.’

‘I do not agree with you,’ says Mr. Melvil. ‘I am glad that the Government has avoided any such harsh measures. They are not a sign of strength, but of weakness—of fear. It is better for it to repose calmly on its strength, and let the conduct of the men be dealt with in the ordinary way.’

‘It would be hardly fair to shoot and hang the sepoys because the culpable carelessness of the Government in allowing those cartridges to be issued has disturbed, and naturally disturbed, their minds,’ says Colonel Grey.

‘It is all the fault of those d——d—I beg your pardon, Mrs. Hilton—fools at headquarters,’ said Colonel Barnes, with a very hearty emphasis on the oath.

‘Mutiny should be stamped out,’ goes on Mr. Hilton, ‘or the disaffection may spread to the whole army.’

‘It cannot do that,’ says Colonel Grey, quietly. ‘There is none of it in my regiment, at all events.’

'Nor in mine,' says Colonel Barnes, his being the regiment to which the Soubahdar Rustum Khan belonged.

'Well, I do not know to which regiment each sepoy belongs,' says Mr. Hilton, 'but I have noticed a marked change in their look and bearing; it is much more insolent towards Europeans. And I have noticed the same among the people of the city. A clerk of mine told me that he heard a very coarse song about us Englishmen being sung in the streets the other day. Then there was that placard that was put up on the walls of the mosque.'

'The work of some crazy fanatic,' says Mr. Melvil.

'And then the sending of those *chupatees*' (cakes) 'from village to village. They may have been passed on as a sort of fiery cross.'

'Fiery cross!' says Mr. Melvil, disdainfully. 'Fiery cross!' says he laughingly. 'More of the nature of hot cross buns, I should say,' and he laughs again, as do the three commanding officers.

'There is something in the air,' persists Mr. Hilton. 'Rupee paper is down.'

'My husband thinks so much about these things because of the Bank being in the city. He is afraid of the loss of the books and the money in case of any popular disturbance,' says Mrs. Hilton.

'The Bank is as safe here as if it were in London,' says Mr. Melvil; 'probably safer.'

'Well, I hope there will not be any disturbance,' goes on Mrs. Hilton, laughing; 'for now that my husband has sold all his old guns, in order to get these new breech-loading ones, we have no weapons in the house, unless you call his hog-spear one.'

'It would be quite sufficient to put down any popular disturbance that is likely to take place here,' says Mr. Melvil, sarcastically; 'even in your hands, Mrs. Hilton,' he adds, laughingly. 'Even if Hilton were away, and you had to defend the Bank yourself, to use the spear yourself like another Queen Boadicea—who was it?'

'I most sincerely hope I may never be called upon to do so. I might hit a man with my parasol, but I do not think I could poke one with a spear,' rejoins Mrs. Hilton, laughing; and then some one else comes up, and the conversation is changed.

The day and the night are divided by the natives (of India, always understood) into three watches of four hours

each; and the hours that separate, begin and end, them—twelve, four, and eight—have an especial name, and are always struck twice over. Twelve slow strokes of the great historic gong, and then twelve more in rattling succession, have long ago proclaimed that the first of our eight days is over and the second one begun. Then came the solemn single stroke. And still the merriment went on. Then two struck, and then three, and still the merriment continued. But at the stroke of three there is a call for the carriages. Tommy Walton gives Lilian Fane's hand a tender squeeze as he helps her into hers, and thinks that there is a slight, but still quite appreciable, return pressure; so he departs homeward in an ecstasy of delight.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DOCTOR.

THE events of the Indian Mutiny would furnish forth a hundred narratives. The events of the outbreak at Khizrabad would furnish forth many. In this particular one we have elected to follow the fortunes of the five girls whom we saw gathered together in the public gardens yesterday morning. But, as will be seen at the end, the movements of Colonel Grey, of the 3rd Grenadiers, were to have an intimate bearing on the fate of some of those girls, and so we shall have to follow them succinctly also. And those movements are to be determined and directed by the fact that Colonel Grey's wife and children being just now in England he is at present living with his cousin, Mrs. Campbell, who is the wife of Dr. Campbell, the Civil Surgeon of Khizrabad.

This post is an important and desirable one. It enables a man to do much good by bringing the resources of Western science to bear on the relief of the sufferings (often very great from easily remediable causes) of the people about him. It is well paid. It has not the drawback (a public as well as private one) which attaches to most public offices in India, that of constant change and movement. It allows a man to remain a long time in one place; to carry on a continuous work; to have local sympathies. The tree grows best in one spot; its roots strike deepest then, its sap has kindest flow, its leafage is most luxuriant. The life of a wanderer remains incomplete, for its sur-

roundings of things and people can never enter fully into it, become part and parcel of it; such complete incorporation comes only of constant contact. Dr. Campbell has been Civil Surgeon of Khizrabad for more than twenty years. His great professional skill, his great kindness of heart, and his eccentricities, have made the name of 'Jock' Campbell—of 'Jan Cummul Sahib'—very widely known. The unsanitary conditions of the towns and villages, the inimical conditions of the earth and air, insufficient clothing, poor food, want of knowledge of the art of living, cause diseases, both of an ordinary and of a loathsome and swift-killing type, to be very prevalent in India. John Campbell had plenty of scope for the exercise of his professional skill—which was very great—in the ancient unsewered city of Khizrabad. I see him now in my mind's eye, his hands deep in his trousers pockets: a man with a large, strong, bony Highland frame; a wide, full, placid forehead; thoughtful, meditative eyes. The large, grave brow, the speculative eyes—those are the two features of the face that memory recalls at once without an effort: its marvellous plate needs stimulating ere there is developed on it still further the long, wide-nostrilled nose, the large, loose-lipped mouth, the broad, square, well-cut chin.

'Let observation with extensive view,' says Dr. Johnson, 'Survey mankind from China to Peru,' and it will find how few men there are to whom the things they long for, work for, and obtain afford the complete satisfaction they had looked for and expected. Dryden says more tersely, 'Look round the habitable globe, how few, Know their own good, or knowing it pursue.' It was very agreeable, therefore, to find a man who had got everything he wanted or cared for, and was thoroughly satisfied therewith; and such a man was 'Jock' Campbell. He would not have changed places with the noble Duke the head of his clan. Had he not his own large, cool, comfortable house—his own grounds, which his botanical skill and the loving care of twenty years had made so beautiful? Had he not horses, and carriages, and servants? Had he not an excellent library? Was he not a physician and a surgeon both, while the poor Duke of Argyll was neither? Did not his Government income, ample and secure, relieve him from all pecuniary considerations in connection with his work? That was a great element in his happiness. The labourer was worthy of his hire; but it was very delightful to him to be relieved from all money-getting cares, to be able to exercise his art free from

all thought of gain. Had he not his hospital, in which he reigned supreme, the arrangements of which he had brought to such a pitch of perfection, in which he performed his miracles of healing, caused the blind to see and the lame to walk, and raised up many from the dead? There was a Divine beneficence in those gifts, bestowed without money and without price. And then, had he not the crowning blessing of an absolutely suitable wife?

Jean Wardlaw, whom he married, had good features, a good head, and a good heart. In her house was economy without meanness; liberality without profusion; careful supervision without annoying interference; order and method without irksome rigidity. You could not have found a happier home than that of the Campbells anywhere. The fact was known from Calcutta to Peshawur. During the many years the Campbells had lived at Khizrabad most of the regiments of the Bengal army had come to be stationed there in their turn. And there was not one of them in which there was not some young fellow who, suffering from the first change of climate—from home-sickness, down with some bad illness—had not owed his restoration to health and cheerfulness to a residence in their large, comfortable house, under Mrs. Campbell's kindly care. To know the Campbells was to like them. They were both very hospitable. They were always putting people up. Their house was ever open to their own friends and to their friends' friends. And so for this fortunate couple the years went by in felicitous flow. Too often the world seems to one a pest-house, a cock-pit, a mad-house. Such happiness was good to see.

At first the happiness of the tender-hearted couple had not been quite complete, from the want of children. But fortune was determined to be kind to John Campbell (who well deserved all its favours), by whom that want was chiefly felt. A little girl was given to make their bright and sweet home-life brighter and sweeter still. The joy of the mother during those first delightful, if anxious, years of babyhood and childhood can be easily imagined. Not so that of the father; it was unusual, extraordinary. The baby was strong and healthy, and gave very little trouble, and so was pronounced 'good'; but on the rare occasions when there was need for it, how tenderly and unweariedly would the big man pace up and down the room—of course that infant slept in the same room with its parents—with the little restless one in his arms! From the earliest they were great friends. A great portion of the

child's earliest years were passed in her father's own sacred apartment. It was there that she spent those hours during which it was deemed advisable that she should lie on the hard, flat floor—for the good of her little backbone. How tenderly would the big man gaze down on the little thing whose only business was to gaze up! It was there that the piece of infinity began to crawl. It was there that it began to balance itself on its little legs. It was there that it first performed the marvellous feat of tottering from the chair it was holding on to to its father's knees—'quite by itself.' K.C.B.'s and K.C.M.G.'s—all the honours in the world could not have given John Campbell as much delight as the witnessing of that sight did. Then came the marvellous period of the first movements of thought, of the first spoken word. It was a period of intense delight to John Campbell. No company in the world could have been more delightful to him than that of his little girl. And when she could do her half-mile she and her father went out for a walk together every morning, down the shady lane at the back of the house, and by the stone-cutter's shed, and along the rope-walk, and by the blue door which the child ever spied out with ever-renewed delight, and by the bit of scrub where the goats were feeding; every morning for a long time along the same quiet, shady, dust-free lane, so that the child should enjoy the pleasure of familiarity, the rapture of recognition. The big man was the little child's constant playfellow. Here in his own room was he put to bed on the sofa and watched over by his little mother. But it was in the huge drawing-room that the scene that rises up before me took place. The mother is seated at the piano, while the Brobdingnagian father and the Lilliputian child are having a dance together. The big man shuffles about, or gives a ponderous skip—heavy of leg though light of heart—while the little child flies hither and thither like a leaf blown about by the wind, and the puppy-dog 'Tim' gambols about them. And now she must play and they must dance—and how the father and mother laugh as they 'set' to one another and dance to the nameless tune, while the little dog laughs to see such sport and performs a dance of his own! The sweet childhood, with its dear, delightful blunders, its perfect imperfect speech (how much more expressive is 'comfable' than comfortable!)—so happy, so complete, so diamond-bright—has passed away. The rarely beautiful golden-brown hair has begun to descend below the widening shoulders. (What a marvellous thing is that

daily growth! Why do we wander into the realms of imagination for wonders when the material world supplies them so fully—why into the dim regions of space for marvels when they are all about us?) The soft, sweet, early dawn is passing away; but it is still the time of childhood, innocent and bright and gay—still the time of fullest love and dependence, of expanding thought and opening character. To little Helen her home is still the whole world, her parents her dearest friends and companions; being by herself, this is especially the case with her. There is no large nursery in which the little folks come to form a society of their own. Most of the hours of the Indian day have to be passed by an English child indoors. The little girl can meet her child friends only in the morning or the evening. And so here the eternal trinity of father and mother and child was still complete—an unity.

But everything costs. The Campbells have now to pay for their happy time in India. It is a heavy price. The child must be sent to England. It is a dreadful prospect; bad enough for the father, worse for the wife and mother. For him there is the anodyne of his work, the consolation of the inevitable. He must remain in India. But must she remain with her husband or go with her child? It is a cruel difficulty. A divided duty and a marring of her happiness either way. The sacrifice of the duties and joys of her wifehood on the one side, of her motherhood on the other.

Mrs. Campbell's own mind was made up. She wished to remain with her husband. How terribly lonely he would be without them! And how he would be cheated! The khansaman's and the bearers' bills, who would control them then? They were excellent servants, but the parable of the 'unjust steward' is true servants' gospel the whole world over. Her life in India was thoroughly and completely happy. She occupied the highest social position there. She had her large and beautifully furnished house, with its lovely grounds, a large retinue of well-trained servants, a carriage to drive in, horses to ride. Here she could give her kindness and her hospitality full play. She could command a large and liberal mode of living. She had about her a society of ladies and gentlemen. She had troops of friends. Above and beyond all this was the dear companionship of her husband—John Campbell was good to live with, he was so gentle and kind and considerate, so unselfish, so thorough a gentleman—that true

and complete companionship which is not always to be found in married life. But these things concerned only *her*: she could set aside the consideration of them. What was the best for the others—that was the only thing that weighed with her. To whom was her presence most necessary? To her husband, she thought.

He, on the other hand, was most urgent that she should go with the child. He put it solely on the ground of the advantage to the child; but she knows that he wishes to spare the mother and child the pain of parting, that he would rather be the lonely one, the one to suffer.

The question would not have stood in need of discussion to-day, as the child was not to 'go home' before the end of the year, were it not that Mrs. Campbell had received a letter from her sister, who is to take the child in case Mrs. Campbell does not go herself, saying that her plans have been altered, that she cannot now wait for the cold season, but has to leave for England the moment she can, in July.

They are seated in Dr. Campbell's study, which looks bright and cheerful, notwithstanding that along the whole length of the top of one of the large and well-filled book-shelves runs a row of grinning human skulls—those vacant domes of thought, those empty palaces of the soul.

'July is such a bad month to go home in,' says Dr. Campbell.

'Not at all,' says Mrs. Campbell. 'It is better to reach England at the beginning of summer than of winter.'

'I think you had better wait until January next, and then take her home yourself.'

'It would be such a great thing for her to escape August and September here,' says Mrs. Campbell, wilyly.

'My dear,' says Dr. Campbell earnestly, 'think how much the poor little thing will suffer at being parted from both of us—she who has been so much with us.'

Mrs. Campbell would have liked to be able to make some quick and sufficient reply to this, but her heart will not let her.

'And think if she were to get ill in England with no one to look after her.'

'There would be Joan'—that was her own sister—'and your sisters.'

'My love, no one can supply the place of a mother to a child of that age.'

That is the shaft that goes home. Poor Mrs. Campbell cannot say anything for some moments—she has such a sharp pang at the heart. Then she says: ‘But how can I go away, John, and leave you here?’

‘Why not?’

‘All alone by yourself, with no one to take care of you?’

‘Oh, I can take care of myself.’

Mrs. Campbell is too wise to give her real opinion on that point—to urge an argument which may defeat her wishes.

‘And I am thinking of myself, John. We have been together twenty years, and how can I leave you now?’

‘We must not think of ourselves, but of her.’

‘We have to think of ourselves too.’

‘It is the arrangement that I should like best.’

‘What! that I should go away from you, John? Thank you! I know many husbands are happiest when they are away from their wives, but I did not expect that from you, John.’

‘My dear,’ began Mr. Campbell, when a voice was heard without the screen of split bamboos which hung before one of the doorways of the room (the Campbells prefer these to curtains, notwithstanding that the latter are considered English, while to the former attaches the opprobrium of being Indian)—was heard exclaiming, ‘Can I come in?’ and Colonel Grey enters with his brisk, springy walk, and his bright, cheerful face.

‘I am sure Henry will agree with me,’ says Mrs. Campbell, ‘that I had better not go to England, but remain with you.’

‘Hardly, as he has sent his own wife home with the children,’ says Dr. Campbell.

‘What! discussing the old question again?’ says Colonel Grey. ‘I thought you had agreed to leave it alone for another six months.’

Then Mrs. Campbell tells him of her sister’s letter; lays the case before him. And now from without comes the short, sharp clanging of a small pony’s hoofs. The subject of the conversation, the object of so much thought and care—it is strange, almost awful, to think of how much good or ill, happiness or unhappiness, to others, we, each one, may be the cause—is returning from her morning ride. She will soon be in the room; so Colonel Grey says quickly, ‘My advice is this: I think Jean should go home with Helen. It would be too great a grief for the child to be parted from both of you at once. She would fret

terribly. She is so very tender-hearted. She will be taken away from this, the only home she has ever known, which has become part of her life; separated from her ayah and her bearer, from her pony and her dog. And to be separated from you both at the same time—why, it will be like death to her.'

'You must go, Jean,' says Dr. Campbell, energetically.

'It is not as if there were several children who could support and console one another. I am here for the next two years, and Jock and I can take care of one another during that time. Jock has all his furlough due to him. When I leave he goes home on three years' furlough. Five years hence it will be time to send Helen to a finishing school; she will then be old enough to take care of herself. There will be plenty of people to look after her—your sisters, my wife, who I am afraid is not likely ever to rejoin me in India again,' and a cloud passes over his usually sunny face. 'You both return to India together. Then, at the end of another three years, Jean runs home for a year and brings Helen out, a grown-up young woman, a finished young lady.'

The subject of his remarks now raises the bamboo screen hanging before one of the outer doors and runs into the room. Her coming in was like the entrance—— I pause: I was, as the reader anticipates, about to write—'of a ray of sunshine'; but at that time and place a ray of sunshine was a symbol of distress and not of gladness, a thing to be anathematised and not blessed. But certainly the child seems to have the sunshine in the sweet twists and tangles of her beautiful hair, which, blown about as it is now, looks like a golden mist. Her coming produces a radiance on her father's face, a brightness on her mother's—all the brighter because the dreaded breaking-up of the home has been deferred for another year.

'Yes, that will do admirably,' says Dr. Campbell, joyfully.

'And May Wynn wants Helen to be one of her bridesmaids,' says Mrs. Campbell, in a glad and happy voice, the gladness and happiness of which have, of course, no concern whatsoever with May Wynn or her marriage.

'Is she talking about her bridesmaids already? Why she was engaged only yesterday morning,' says Dr. Campbell, as he passes the long fingers, which have performed so many a difficult and dangerous operation, lovingly and tenderly over his little daughter's sunny locks—she had come up at once to his broad knees and was leaning tenderly against them—and presses the golden head

gently towards him, as if the thought were passing through his mind that he has possession of her for a little while longer.

‘Of course not,’ says Mrs. Campbell. ‘But of course we had a long talk about her engagement at Mrs. Melvil’s last night.’

May Wynn and Mrs. Campbell are great friends; Mrs. Campbell has been as a mother to her.

‘And that was how she came to mention that she should like Helen for a bridesmaid. The marriage is to take place a little before Christmas; her father wants her to complete her year with him.’

‘Naturally,’ says Dr. Campbell, as he draws his own only daughter still more fondly towards him.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE EASTERN DAY.

THOUGH it is the morning after Mr. Melvil’s delightful surprise of a dance, this is not the first time that Dr. Campbell and his little daughter have met. The sun had not risen when they had gone out together for the walk they had taken in company every morning ever since she could walk, while behind them came the buggy in which he was to make his professional round, and the pretty little pony on which she was to take her morning gallop. And Colonel Grey has also had his morning ride. And Mrs. Campbell has long been busy with her usual outdoor and indoor work. But still to-day the boom of the morning gun has not been the signal of awakening to the English folk of the station as it usually is, for at the time of its firing a good many of them are only just getting into bed. And the horses have only just got home, and can hardly be taken out again. So the Mall has not as many people riding and driving on it as usual. Stout old Colonel Barnes has his early morning cup of tea in bed, and then turns over for another sleep. A whole day in a snipe jheel, a whole day after game, anywhere, does not tire Major Coote; but a social function like that of the night before does very much, and so he too lies in bed and foregoes his usual morning walk. Young Walton and young Hill prolong their slumbers in the garden long after the sun is up.

But those cool fresh morning hours are deemed by many too

precious not to be made use of. Mr. Melvil himself is out a very little after his usual hour. He visits the palace to inspect the progress of the work, in the carrying out of which those specially long ladders have had to be employed; he rides out to an ancient royal garden without the walls, where, too, the Nuwâb has requisitioned some new work to be done. It is a favourite place of visit with the Sikunder Begum; she wants a new sleeping pavilion built there. 'She is always wanting something,' Mr. Melvil says to himself angrily. When Beatrice Fane calls to Lillian—their beds are placed side by side in the middle of the room, so as to get the benefit of the punkah—the latter replies in the words of the sluggard: 'You have waked me too soon, I must slumber again,' and remains in bed, to the disgust of the man pulling the punkah, whose labours are thereby prolonged another couple of hours—others sleeping is his waking. But Beatrice herself is soon spinning over the smooth roads with William Hay in his dog-cart. And this morning above all others May Wynn will not forego her usual morning drive with her father. Philip Lennox, with the lover's greed, had been very urgent with her to ride out with him; but no, she must drive her father out as usual, though she will have a walk in the Public Gardens with Philip afterwards.

Maud Hilton had not more than an hour's sleep. Tossing restlessly on her bed, she had welcomed the sound of the morning gun as a signal to arise. Dressing herself noiselessly so as not to awaken Agnes, their beds being also side by side under the same punkah, she steps out of the room and mounts the inner staircase leading on to the lofty flat-terraced roof. She mounts to the highest level of it. A profound silence reigns around. The night sounds have ceased, those of the day not yet begun, or if they have, they do not reach up to that height. It is the solemn awakening of the day. The wan moon is fading away in the west; the east is beginning to glow and dim the splendour of the morning star. From where she stands the eye has command of a vast sweep of landscape, but in this dim light it does not obtrude itself upon her notice. She is alone with her sorrow. She wrestles with it. She does not seek to ignore it. She will meet it face to face. She will set it before her in all its due proportion. Yes, he was the most personable man she had ever known—her very ideal of a man, both in person and character. She had never met another like him; should never meet another like him; men

like him are not common. He had never carried his attentions to her to the extent that it was dishonourable of him to draw back. He was not a man to do anything dishonourable. But he had most undoubtedly been attracted to her. There was a great similarity in their characters. Had not those chattering women, who spoil so many matches, but whose sharp eyes do see things, begun to look wise and talk? Had she not observed significant looks when she and Captain Lennox were together? He had undoubtedly sought her company. It had seemed as if warm friendliness might pass into a still warmer feeling. It might have been; it would have been; she might have been the happiest of women. Then comes a fierce tumult of sorrow and regret and vain imaginings, the latter the worst of all. How perfect would her life have been! On what a pinnacle of joy should she have been set! How she would have bent all her powers to make him happy! What love and service she would have rendered him! How she would have devoted her whole life to him! Oh, sad sorrow of the 'might have been'! These thoughts were almost too much for her; they almost overpowered her; almost set loose the tears, which must then flow in torrents. But her pride, her enormous power of self-control, came to her aid. She, Maud Hilton, allow an unreturned love to overpower her! She, Maud Hilton, weep for a man! He is worth weeping for, but she shall not weep. Her grief had almost overthrown her. She had leant her loosened frame against the parapet wall; she had placed her elbows upon it; her head had for a moment sunk into her hands. The shock has made her reel, but she will not let it bear her down. She means to ride proudly through the lists of life. She lifts herself up into a standing posture. She plants herself firmly on her feet. She throws back her head. She puts her outward senses, her hearing and seeing, to work again. She listens to the rising hum of the town, to the far-off cawing of the crows wending their way towards the city from their distant leafy roosting-places. She sets herself to notice the gradual brightening of the sky. She watches the gradual coming into view of the widespread landscape around. She turns her eyes down on the city beneath her—looks down on the English quarter. There is the tall spire of the church, and behind it the high-pitched thatched roof of the bungalow in which May Wynn dwells with her father. Had it not been for her coming! And why had Lennox preferred her? Wherein was May superior to

herself? She had a slimmer waist—that she would allow. Who had the better intellect? Who the stronger character? Who the noblest nature? Who was the better fitted to mate with him? Was it because of her soft, languishing ways, of her wily sweetness, her designing gentleness, her artful feminality, the influence of which over men is so well understood? What, the grand concave of the heavens and the beautiful spread of the earth shut out from her gaze again! What, struck blind again! Once more is she called upon to fight—but what ignoble foes! She was not ashamed to struggle with her sorrow. Unmaidenly to allow that she loved him—how can she deny the fact? What woman could help it? That sorrow is a fierce and a strong enemy, but not an ignoble one. But these—envy and mean detraction! They shall not overcome her. No; May Wynn is worthy of him—has won him by no mean arts—well worthy of him. No, no; that sweetness and gentleness and distinctive womanliness are indeed her own—are genuine and not assumed. She may not be what is called a clever woman, but she is no silly fool. She has plenty of information, plenty of mental power, has received the highest education. Her gifts of mind and person and character are all above the common. As worthy a representative of English womanhood, she, as he of English manhood. She is well worthy of him. God grant them both a happy life!

The burthen has fallen from her. The pain of the wound cannot be assuaged in a moment, the scar of it may remain for life; but she has won in the fight.

There is now about the house, as she descends into it, all the bustle of the early morning hours. The bearer is dusting the furniture in this room, the sweeper sweeping out another, a khidmutgar preparing the early morning tea. Maud sits down to have a cup of the modern nectar, and her heaviness is still more lightened. The spiritual rests a good deal on the material. And nowhere are the reviving and refreshing and exhilarating effects of the divine herb felt so much as in the feverish, languorous East.

Then Maud descends from the upper story in which they live, to the stately portico in front of the lower rooms which are occupied by the Bank. Here the horses, her sister's and her own, are standing ready saddled. She goes up and pats the proud neck of 'Selim,' her own steed, fondly. He is a splendid Arab horse. He has the characteristically beautiful head of his noble race in perfection. Mark the wide open forehead, the large eye, the square jaw,

the fine muzzle, the large full nostrils! Maud is not so excellent a horsewoman as her sister Agnes, but she has learnt all about the points of a horse, both from Agnes and from her father. She lets her eye dwell fondly on his compact, handsome frame; lets it travel from the long sloping shoulder to the proudly set-on tail, marks the clean flat legs. Life is not without its consolations so long as 'Selim' is her own. And now Agnes too comes down, and the two mount, and Agnes's brace of splendid black greyhounds are let loose. The sisters make their way out of the city and get on to the banks of the river, where there is a wide expanse of open uncultivated ground, and there indulge in a long exhilarating gallop. And Maud Hilton's spirits rise as she feels her game little horse bounding under her. The ground consists of long sloping sand-ridges; as she feels him sweeping down a long soft declivity she forgets the past—the so recent past—in the joy of the immediate present. The Arab horse has a peculiarly smooth and easy downward motion in his gallop; and to canter down a long, smooth, gentle slope on the back of one is to enjoy one of the most delightful sensations on earth, as we can from experience say. 'Black Care sits behind the horseman,' says the Latin poet, implying thereby that no one can escape from it. Leaving aside the metaphor, and coming to the actual and physical fact, there is no doubt that the best antidote for melancholy, for depression of spirits, is a good gallop through a cold, fresh, bracing atmosphere. For the time at least there is no doubt of it: you *can* gallop away from care. There is a superiority in riding—cavalier is a title of honour—and certainly on the back of a good horse you feel superior to everything. It is said that the great benefit of riding arises from its action on the heart. Certainly this ride has done Maud Hilton's heart great good. When they have re-entered the city and arrived at the Public Gardens, and dismounting at one of the gateways, have walked into them, and at once encountered May Wynn and Philip Lennox strolling along a path together, Maud is able to greet them and enter into conversation with them with easy composure, even when they have moved to the favourite corner by the side of the watercourse, and are standing under the shadow of the banian-tree where she had received the morning before the terrible shock of knowing for certain that Philip Lennox's preference was for May Wynn and not for her.

And here they are joined by Beatrice Fane and William Hay. And Major Fane comes sauntering up under the huge umbrella,

twirling his little cane. He, of course, has to be up early, for the working hours at the arsenal are just now from six to twelve. And the number of the party is made up to what it was the morning before, for though Lilian is not with them, Miss Lyster, the girl, if one may so call her, with the 'mysterious mother,' comes round the beautiful curve of the watercourse—'Elaine,' some one had said, as they had watched her coming along with her peculiar graceful gliding movement, her figure standing out so clearly, with the open water in front of her and the dark mass of shrubs and trees behind—and she stops and joins them. She, of course, had not lain in bed. For her, more than for anyone else, it is necessary to seek refreshment and strength in the cold bath of the early morning air. Most so at this season of the year, with its enormous length of day, when she has to be so long with her mother. And they form a merry, laughing, rapid-speaking party: for have they not all the events of the night before to talk about? And if there is reason that some of them (Maud, and Agnes for her) should not be very joyful, there is also reason why most of them (May Wynn and Beatrice Fane, and Philip Lennox and William Hay) should be very joyful indeed.

But now it is time to be indoors; it is nearing eight o'clock. They move on together to one of the gateways of the Gardens and there go their several ways. Since they parted here yesterday morning it has passed from the region of the unexpected into that of the expected that Philip Lennox should see May Wynn home. They have all soon reached the shelter of their respective bungalows. Soon those bungalows are all being put into a state of siege against the adverse forces of the hot-wind and sun: the numerous doors and the few windows are all closed, the coarse screens of split bamboo hanging before the archways of the verandahs, the finer screens of the same which hang before the outer doorways of the rooms, are all let down to resist the entrance of the terrible sunshine, while thick heavy mattresses of a peculiar kind of grass are placed against all the doorways on the westward side, from whence comes daily the fierce rush of the fiery wind. And now the coolies engaged for the purpose have begun their task of keeping these grass screens constantly wet.

To those fresh from England, with the English vigour in their veins, with the English love of movement strong upon them, these long hours of confinement in a damp, dark house, are by no means agreeable. They do not care for these luxuries of the

East. But to the old Indian, whose powers have been subdued to the climate, these long hours seem eminently enjoyable. How delicious the coolness! How delightful to recline in your dimly-lighted room, book in hand, and let the cool moist air blow over you—to suck it in, lightly clad as you are, at every pore. That pleasure of breathing the whole body over is one you do not enjoy in the West. How delightful to the overwrought nerves is the profound quiet, the deep silence, the sense of absolute freedom from intrusion! Then there is the same pleasure of contrast, the same sense of delight at escape and shelter from the condition of things without, that you experience when seated of a winter's night in England in your warm, bright, close-curtained room, while without is the darkness and the fierce icy blast. Here you are in your cool, dark, quiet, curtained room, while without is the fierce turmoil of the sunshine, the fierce rushing of the wind, the glow, the heat, and the dust. To escape from that terrible glare alone, to escape from that terrible heat alone, to escape from those terrible dust-clouds alone, would be deemed a blessing—but to escape from them all!

And now comes the usual quiet retired routine of the day. (All life is a routine, and, except the beginning and the end of it, there are few things in it that are not repeated a thousand times over, day by day, month by month, year by year.) First the delicious cold bath in your own special bath-room; then the big many-dished Indian breakfast; then some hours of reading and music and work; then tiffin; then the quiet, very much undressed, lounge in your bedroom, or the afternoon *siesta*. And then the men, impatient for their racquets, rush out between four and five o'clock. But the ladies wait until the sun has gone down further ere they emerge from the shelter of the house; some wait until he has almost set. Then comes the evening ride or drive along the well-watered Mall; the going to the band; the meeting together for a game of croquet—tennis and afternoon tea, the pleasant garden-parties, which are now so much in vogue, were not then invented. Then for the unmarried men comes the evening at the mess. And the married folk return home to the excellent full-course dinner, with the dainty appointments and the pretty adornments of the table—the aromatic leaves or rosebuds floating in the finger-glasses is a delightful custom—and the black-visaged white-coated big-turbaned attendants who wait so well, moving about so noiselessly on their naked feet. Then

come the after-dinner hours, passed as they are here with us. And then to bed, under the waving punkah, with nothing but a sheet over you or under you. But we have not arrived at bed-time yet.

CHAPTER XV.

THE NEWS FROM MEHNDI ALI.

MRS. CAMPBELL has a dinner-party to-night. The Hiltons are dining with her. Mrs. Hilton is a great friend of hers, and she is very fond of the two girls. As May Wynn is also a great favourite with her, perhaps a greater, having come to her more for assistance and advice, the good lady had been greatly troubled when the question arose on which of the two, Maud Hilton or May Wynn, Captain Lennox was likely to bestow the golden apple of his choice. Generalising from her own happy case, Mrs. Campbell was a warm advocate of marriage, and always liked to help on one if she could. But here she had stood aloof: how could she help the one without hurting the other? It is a very disagreeable thing to have one's feelings tugging opposite ways. What she would have liked best, perhaps, would have been for Lennox to have proposed to Maud before May came. Then there would have been none of this bother, none of this troublesome divided feeling. However, the matter is settled now, and if she is very sorry for Maud she is very glad for May. Tommy Walton and Loo Hill are also dining with her to-night. They are great favourites with her, as indeed they are with everyone in the station, for, notwithstanding their boyish follies and foolishnesses, they are both honest, open-hearted, straightforward, mettlesome lads.

And stout old Barnes is dining to-night where he loves best to dine—at his own mess, the arrangements of which have been brought to such a pitch of perfection by his constant loving care: where the soup is always so good and the *entrées* so toothsome (people do not care to eat the fish from the Jumna, because of the dead bodies, you know); and the gram-fed mutton, so fat and juicy; and the curry, whether wet or dry, so excellent; and the pudding a pudding; and the overland cheese so fresh; and the excellent wines cooled to perfection.

And Major Coote is dining at his own mess, that of the 76th, though the long function is to him more a source of sorrow than

of delight, as it is to his good friend Barnes—so do men differ. What he himself likes best is the scratch meal cooked at a camp-fire, on some rugged Himalayan slope, high up; or in the depths of some tiger-haunted jungle, low down.

And Mrs. Fane has one of the dinner-parties she loves best, small and select: Mr. Melvil, and old Brigadier Moss and his wife, and Colonel Grey, and one or two others. William Hay is dining there also: this is now almost a matter of course. And May Wynn, too, has a dinner-party of her own: very small but sufficient, consisting as it does of her father and Philip Lennox and herself.

And while the English people are sitting down quietly to their dinners the Sikunder Begum is pacing her chamber restlessly, moving quickly backwards and forwards from one wall to the other. And the slave-girl is standing in the narrow balcony without, and looking down the giddy depth below her, with the thought, the firm anticipation, that some day the Begum will lead her to that low parapet and bid her jump over, or push her over, or order the eunuch, Jhundoo Khan, to cast her over. The Begum seems in the very mood for such a deed to-night: she has stormed at her, and raved at her, and beaten her, and all for nothing.

‘Ayh! pig-begotten——’

The girl rushes into the chamber so hastily that her foot catches in something and she stumbles, and the Begum, taking advantage of her posture, hits her on the back of the head with her slipper. Luckily the hard round knot into which the girl's hair is twisted breaks the force of the blow.

‘Always tumbling about, you fool!’ cries the Begum. ‘Go and call Jhundoo Khan—call him quickly. Call him at once, you——’

The girl rushes out and then rushes back again, breathless.

‘He is coming!’ she says, panting.

‘Coming! why did you not bring him with you? I told you to bring him with you——’

‘No; only to call him,’ gasps the girl.

‘Do you want to make me out a liar, you vile-born, foul-fed, daughter of Satan!’ cries the Begum, furiously. ‘I say that I told you to bring him with you, and you say that I told you only to call him. Do you want to make me out a liar? Do you? Do you?’

The vituperation has somewhat relieved the Begum's feelings, and she is about to relieve them still further by a little use of the

slipper, when the heavy inner door of the apartment is opened, the heavy *purdah* or curtain lifted, and the eunuch enters.

'What have you been about?' cries the Begum, turning upon him. 'I sent for you half an hour ago.' 'Half an hour ago!—two minutes ago,' says Jhundoo Khan, coolly.

Of course he was desirous of keeping in the Begum's good graces, more especially at this time, when there seemed so near a prospect of the Nuwâb regaining his ancient independent power, in which case the Sikunder Begum would rule the State, and be in a position to make those she favoured wealthy and powerful. But he was the Begum's keeper and not her servant; and, like those of his unhappy class, he was very sensitive to praise and blame.

'You went on with what you were doing.'

'I was sitting down and had to get up.'

'Then you must have crawled up the stairs.'

'I could not fly up them like a bird.'

The Begum keeps a book of reprisals—in which Melvil's name has prominent entry—a mental memorandum-book of scores to be paid off. She makes an entry in it now. But she does not care to quarrel with the eunuch just at present; she has need of his services in many ways. So she turns to the slave-girl and says, 'Begone, you witch!' and then, turning to Jhundoo Khan:

'Has the messenger returned?'

'Not yet.'

'He has been gone a very long time.'

'It is some way to the Sepoy lines, and then Rustum Khan has to communicate with Matadeen Panday. Calm yourself—they will both be here very soon, I am sure.'

To calm her restlessness, the Begum steps out into the balcony and lets the cool evening air rest on her bare head, meet her bare face. The beautiful balcony with its tapering marble columns profusely adorned with inlaid work, and its exquisitely pierced marble panels—and the beautiful woman with her lovely face and exquisite figure, which her veil of dewy lightness enveloped but did not conceal, standing out on it—would have made a charming picture. But the Begum does not stand there long: she hears the creak of the heavy door, and steps back into the room. It is the Soubahdar Rustum Khan. She welcomes him eagerly. 'What is the news?' he asks, as, after their exchange of hasty greetings, he and the Begum seat themselves—she on the *daïs*, he on a stool by its side. 'Is it about the court-martial?'

'Yes.'

'What is the sentence?'

'The Havildar Guffoor Khan——'

'My cousin!'

'And four others, imprisonment for ten years.'

'Ten years' imprisonment!'

'And all the others five years.'

'They shall not suffer it!'

'It is resolved so—not even for one day. Their brother sowars will march to the jail to-morrow afternoon and deliver them.' (The men referred to were the mutinous troopers of the 3rd Cavalry at Abdoolapore, of course.) 'The two Sepoy regiments have agreed to join with them. They will slay their English officers, and, after they have delivered the men from jail, all three regiments will march straight for here. They will march away at once, so that the English soldiers may not be able to overtake them before they have reached here.'

'This will be to-morrow morning?'

'No, to-morrow evening.'

'Why the delay?'

'Do you not see? If they set to work in the morning they would have to march all through the heat of the day, and perhaps not be able to cook their bread, and their movements would be known, and the infidels would be able to make their arrangements in the daytime when everyone is at his post and things are easy to be got at, and would be able to follow them quickly and gain every information about them. No, no; Mehndi Ali has arranged much better. He has sent me full particulars.'

The Begum picks up from the bed what looks like a little bit of white pencil, but is in reality a long narrow strip or ribbon of paper tightly rolled up. It is Mehndi Ali's communication, sent in this form for easy concealment about the person of the messenger: it could also in this form be more easily got rid of in case of necessity, flung away to a distance, or dropt so as not to be seen, or swallowed.

'The warriors will seize their arms to-morrow evening about sunset, at the time when the infidels are engaged in their devotions, gathered together in their place of worship, where they blaspheme the name of God, saying that he is not one, but three.'

'Truly hell shall be their portion for it,' says Rustum Khan.

'Seizing their arms, they will set fire to their lines and to the

houses of their officers, and slay such of these as are about,' reads on the Begum. 'Then the English will be confused and daunted. They will not know what is about to be attempted against them under the cover of the night. They will be taken unawares. They will not be able to make any arrangements during the night time, not be able to get their guns out. The man in command here is like a fat buffalo. He is not active, neither in mind nor in body. There is nothing to fear from him.'

The Begum is now speaking and reading in a very calm, quiet, self-possessed way; now that she has settled down to business her irritability and excitability have quite departed from her.

'Then, the prisoners being delivered, the three regiments will march straight for here. They will have the whole cool night to travel in.'

'Then they ought to be here on Monday morning?'

'Yes, early; even if they take a rest on the way.'

'Why, they may arrive just at the very time when we are on parade.'

'On parade! There are no parades now.'

'Yes, there is to be a general parade of all three regiments on Monday morning. The order was issued to-day.'

'Why this?'

'In order that we may have read out to us a proclamation of the Government in connection with the disbandment of the regiment at Barrackpore.'

'When will the parade be held?'

'At sunrise.'

'They may not be here until later; it is forty miles. But the men of your regiment are ready to join them whenever they may come?'

'Beyond doubt.'

'And the men of the 76th?'

'Yes; it has had its face turned away from the Government for a long time. Most of the men are Brahmins. But you must make sure of the Soubahdar Matadeen Panday; he is a Brahmin of the highest caste. He has great influence with the men. A great deal will depend on him—everything may depend on him.'

'How is he to be secured?'

'I have told you already. Don't you know how the Brahmins get money out of the people on every occasion they can—at a birth, or a marriage, or a death, and the various days after them.

They always go about with their mouths wide open; their hands are always stretched out. They are always wanting to be fed, wanting to have something given to them; always looking for gifts and presents. The Brahmins are always seeking for money: gold, or silver, or copper—it does not matter which. And Matadeen Panday is more greedy after money even than most of his bond-brethren. You can only buy him for money.'

The Begum frowns. On her face has been a quiet look of fixed thought, of set reflection; but now there suddenly comes over it a curious expression, the meaning of which Rustum Khan does not understand at all—because he is not acquainted with the circumstances which have produced it. At this moment the Begum is thinking how she might have purchased Matadeen Panday's adherence otherwise than by money. Brahmins possess the right of entry into the women's private apartment, into the sacred precincts of the zenana, and are said to put it to other than pious uses.

But the Begum had rejected his advances peremptorily. Her principles were lax; but she did draw a line, the line of religion: her favours were limited by the pretty wide circle of the Faith. That was her standard of honour. That was where her religious principles came in. Not even for the sake of the cause on whose success her heart was so much set could she violate that rule.

'Well, then, he must be bought.'

'It is the more necessary to secure him, because the city guards next week are to be furnished by his regiment, and he himself will be in command of the guard at the palace here.'

'Ha! One of the first things to be done on Monday will be to obtain possession of the gates of the city and of the palace here. Yes; he must be secured. The next thing to be done will be to gain possession of the arsenal and of the Government treasury.'

'It may not be so easy to gain possession of the arsenal.'

'Why not?'

'The gates are strong.'

'There are only six or seven Englishmen in the Arsenal.'

'There are the Khulasees, the men on the fixed establishment.'

'They are not trained men like your sepoys.'

'But if the Englishmen only close the gates, how are we to force them open? There is no water before the gate opening on to the river just now, and there is no moat before the gate open-

ing into the city; but still the gates are very strong, and we have no means of blowing them open—we have no guns.'

'If you cannot get through the gates, you must get over the walls,' says the Begum.

'How?' says Rustum Khan.

'By means of ladders.'

'But we have no ladders. The walls are very lofty. We should need scaling-ladders—very long ladders.'

'They have been provided for us,' says the Begum, smiling.

'Provided for us! By whom?' says Rustum Khan, looking puzzled.

'By Mr. Melvil,' says the Begum, with a laugh.

'Mr. Melvil! In what way?'

'In connection with the repairs to the palace. Very tall ladders. They are standing in the east courtyard now.'

'Good! How good!' says Rustum Khan. 'What a mind your Highness has!'

'Things are done by thinking,' says the Begum. 'The seizure of the magazine must be your business, Rustum Khan.'

'Very well.'

'And you must devote to-morrow to thinking over what has to be done and in what manner it can be done. You must make arrangements with the Soubahdar Matadeen Panday and the others who are on our side. *Futteh ba bundobust*'—('arrangements ensure success,' or, 'victory (comes) from arrangements')—says the Begum, repeating her favourite maxim.

The heavy curtain is lifted and the eunuch, Jhundoo Khan, habitual betrayer of his trust, ushers the Soubahdar Matadeen Panday into the room. After an interchange of complimentary greetings (the Soubahdar is very much of a ladies' man, after the oriental fashion), the Begum desires him to be seated, with her most honeyed words and in her sweetest manner. Then she proceeds to business at once: raises the epistle from Mehndi Ali Khan, which hangs down like a long curl, and informs him of the contents of it.

'The three regiments will be here early on Monday morning. They take possession of the city. The English are driven out or slain. We regain our ancient sovereignty.'

'They will only throw away their means of livelihood—incur great loss, as the two regiments that have mutinied in Bengal have done,' says Matadeen Panday, shaking his head.

'They will not lose, but gain,' says the Begum. 'What

rewards shall not be bestowed on those who place kings and princes on their thrones again?’

‘All this if they succeed. But they may fail.’

‘We cannot fail, if we are only bold and brave enough. And you are not a *dur-phokna*’ (a colloquialism corresponding to our ‘funk-stick’), ‘Soubahdar Sahib! You have displayed your valour on many a battle-field.’

This was an appeal to the old man’s vanity, which she knew was large.

‘I can be brave enough for my own profit, but not to my loss,’ says the old Brahmin, coolly.

‘Loss! there can be no loss! And look at the gain! You obtain the command, the full command, of your regiment, in which you are now of less account than the English sergeant. You obtain a thousand rupees a month, instead of your beggarly sixty or seventy. All this at once: and hereafter titles and honours, an estate.’

‘What I have, I have,’ says the old man, sententiously. ‘What I may have, I may have; but I have it not. One bird in the hand is worth many in the bush. The dog opened his mouth to catch the shadow and lost the bone. My means of subsistence is secure for the rest of my life. In two years more I get my pension. I can then eat my bread sitting at home.’

‘If there is anyone to give it to you. But if the Company’s *raj* (rule) is upset, where will be your pension then?’

‘If——’

‘It must be.’

‘Keep to the certain until the uncertain becomes the certain,’ says the old soldier-priest. Such play on words is much loved by orientals. The passages in Shakespeare filled with elaborate conceits and an elaborate play on words—to the very crack of doom—such as the one in which occurs the line, ‘a single-soled jest, solely singular for the singleness’—which have lost all merit with us, would still be highly valued in the East.

‘I like certainties,’ he says, stroking his long projecting chin. ‘While the Company is supreme I know what to do. When the power of the King of Delhi and the Nuwâb of Khizrabad is re-established, I shall know what to do too.’

‘They are about to be re-established.’

‘*Befayeda*’ (‘no good’—literally, ‘without profit’), says Rustum Khan, looking at the Begum significantly. ‘Words will not do it. And we are losing time. There are many things to settle.’

The Begum would rather have gained her point by argument. She did not like parting with any of her garnered security, any of her hoarded power. But if it must be done it must. And she goes to the point at once.

‘What amount will secure us your services?’

‘I am not greedy,’ says the old man, ‘not greedy in the least. I want no more than what I have. But I like a certainty. I want a certainty to replace my certainty: a sum of money that will afford me an income equivalent to my pension. The trouble, and the risk of losing one’s life, I give you for nothing.’

The Begum descends from the bedstead. As she stands within an arm’s length of him, the old Brahmin gazes at her as the Elders of old gazed on Susannah. The Begum moves round to the back of the bedstead. She opens the huge coarse lock of the coffer with a huge coarse key. She lifts the heavy lid. She comes back again to the front of the bed with a little packet in her hand. She unwraps the piece of coarse linen, such as jewellers wrap their wares in, and gives to view a splendid jewel. How the huge gems glitter in the glare of the primitive oil-lamp, shaped exactly like the old Roman ones, which the eunuch had lighted before he left the room! How the old man’s eyes glisten in return!

‘There!—the value of that will ensure you an income larger than any the Company has ever paid you or is ever likely to pay you.’

The Soubahdar extends an eager hand to meet her lagging, reluctant one. He clutches at the concentrated wealth. He holds the jewel up towards the light. His eyes drink in its brightness. How it sends forth beams of light! How the emeralds and the rubies glow! How the huge diamonds sparkle and send forth their gleams of many-coloured light! How they coruscate! Their sparkle is too much for the Begum; she must have the jewel in her hand again. Her pretty little forefinger and thumb remove it from between the long lean forefinger and square-topped thumb of the Soubahdar almost with a snatch.

‘You buckle it like this——’

‘Oh, yes!’ cries the Soubahdar, as he snatches it back again and disposes of it quickly amid the folds of his clothing.

They then address themselves to business. This does not take very long. The Begum has reduced what is to be done to a formula: ‘Seize the city gates, the arsenal, and the Government treasury.’ They will then be in possession of the great fortified

city, with all its historical associations and influences ; have within its walls a large garrison of well-drilled soldiers ; have the means of paying them ; be well supplied with artillery, with guns both heavy and light, with muskets and cartridges, with weapons of every kind, with a great store of powder and shot and shell, with all the munitions of war. It would be no easy matter for the English to dislodge them. At all events, they would not be able to do so at once. They would not have the means ready. This was not the season of the year for operations in the field ; and if they did not retake the city at once their chance of doing so would diminish day by day. The movement would spread. The Company had created an army the like of which for numbers, discipline, and equipment had never been seen in India before—had made and manufactured a supply of cannon, a store of all the munitions of war, such as had never been seen there before either. These great engines of success would now be turned against itself. This great ready-made army numbered five hundred thousand men. The swarms of Mahratta cavalry would take the field again ; the Mahomedan powers, the Hindoo powers, would raise great forces ; the famous Sikh army would reform : it was but the other day that its soldiers had been forced to lay down their arms : they were not yet reconciled to the pick and the ploughshare. Taught by former experience, Mahomedan, Mahratta, Rajpoot, Sikh, would all make common cause against the English. The white-faced intruders would be swept out of the land, would never be able to gain a footing in it again. So discourses the Begum.

‘The Kafir has got the better of us after all,’ exclaims the Begum when Matadeen Panday had departed, a little while afterwards. ‘He has got the certainty of the jewel and we the uncertainty of his promise. Suppose he should prove false to us at the last ?’

‘He will not now. He did not like to run the risk of finding himself a penniless man forced to work or beg. If our enterprise does not succeed, why, he will seek safety in some temple and have ample means to live there quietly and comfortably.’

‘We must succeed,’ says the Begum. ‘But suppose we should not, what would *you* do ?’

‘Oh, I do not know,’ says Rustum Khan, with a gay, careless laugh. ‘Something——’

(To be continued.)

STRIKING A LIGHT.

'PLEASE, sir, the rats be a rampagin' in the lumber-room as makes the blood curl!'

For fifty years I had never been into that lumber-room. It is situated up a steep flight of steps in the back kitchen, and had once been inhabited by a button-boy. Here is an extract from my grandmother's account-book for the year 1803:—

Footman	14 <i>l</i> .
Page	4
Cook	12
Housemaid	7

Verily prices have risen since 1803!

However, to return to the four-pounder. He inhabited this room some eighty years ago; then it was abandoned, finally locked up, and the key lost. About fifty years ago, as a boy, I did explore the place, through the window, after nests. My grandfather died. Then my father succeeded, and the room remained during his reign unopened. My father died, and I succeeded to the old house. I have been in it fourteen years, and till the other day, when the kitchen-maid complained that the rats in this lumber-room over the back kitchen made her blood 'curl,' by which she meant, presumably, 'curdle,' I had never thought of an exploration.

To abate the nuisance, however, I did, the other day, break open the door and enter the long-abandoned room. Since the four-pounder had occupied it, for some years that room must have been employed as a place for lumber, because it proved to contain a quantity of old, disused articles in iron and tin, and amongst these two stands for rushlights, a tinder-box, also a glass phosphorus bottle.

Such a find carried one back, as few other things could, to early days, and showed one the enormous advance we have made in this century in the comforts of life.

Some of us can remember the rushlight, a few the phosphorus bottle, fewer the tinder-box.

Of the rushlights I found, one was familiar to me; the other, probably an earlier type, I had never seen. The former consisted

of a cylinder of sheet-iron, perforated with round holes, the cylinder about two feet high. This contained the rushlight. At the bottom was a basin for a little water, that the sparks, as they fell, might be extinguished.

Well do I recall such rushlight lamps! One always burned at night in my father's bedroom, and when I was ill I was accommodated with one as well. The feeble, flickering light issued through the perforations and capered in fantastic forms over the walls and furniture.

The other rushlight lamp was of a different construction. It consisted of a long spiral of iron wire, and was probably discarded for the newer and safer invention of the lamp with perforated holes. The spiral coil would prevent the lanky rushlight from falling over and out of the lamp, but not the red-hot dock from spluttering on to the carpet or boards of the floor.

It was necessary in former times for a light to be kept burning all night in one room, for to strike a light was a long and laborious operation. There were little silver boxes that contained amadou, the spongy texture of a puff-ball, and some matches dipped in sulphur, also a flint. One side of the box was armed with a steel. In striking a light the holder put the amadou in position to receive the sparks from the steel as he struck the flint, then, when the amadou glowed, he touched it with the brimstone end of the match and ignited that—a matter of five to ten minutes. Why, a burglar could clear off with the plate before the roused master of the house could strike a light and kindle his candle to look for him!

The tinder-box employed commonly in kitchens and cottages was a different application of the same principle. It consisted of a circular tin or iron box, with the socket for a candle soldered on to the top. This box contained a removable bottom. When opened it displayed a steel and a lump of flint. These were taken out and the removable bottom lifted up, when below was disclosed a mass of black tinder. The manufacture of this tinder was one of the accomplishments of our forefathers, or rather foremothers. It was made of linen rag burnt in a close vessel, charred to tinder, without being set on fire, and the manufacture of tinder had to take place weekly, and consumed a considerable amount of linen.

In the morning early, before dawn, the first sounds heard in a small house were the click, click, click of the kitchen-maid,

striking flint and steel over the tinder in the box. When ignited a match was applied, the candle lighted, and at once the plate of tin let down over the precious tinder to extinguish it. If any one possessing an old tinder-box will try his hand at it he will find how toilsome, unpleasant, and lengthy the process is.

Then came in the phosphorus bottle, but held its ground a very short while, because of the danger attending it. This consisted of a small bottle, like one of smelling-salts, that contained phosphorus. A match was thrust into it and twirled about till it ignited the match; but as simultaneously the phosphorus in the bottle sometimes caught fire, this invention was speedily discarded.

The next advance was the lucifer-match, with phosphorus and sulphur combined at the end. But this was dangerous, and frightful accidents attended the manufacture. I spent some winters at Pau, in the South of France, and near our house were the cottages of poor people who worked at match-making. The pans of melted phosphorus into which the heads of the matches were dipped would explode suddenly and scatter their flaming contents over the match-girls. My mother, as an angel of goodness, was wont to visit and minister to many and many a poor little burnt girl, who had thus been set fire to.

Lastly came the match made without phosphorus. When we think of the toil and trouble that the lighting of a fire occasioned we can understand what store was set on never letting a fire on the hearth go out. An old woman on Dartmoor, recently dead, boasted on her death-bed: 'I be sure I'se goin' to glory; for sixty-three years have I been married, and never in all them years once let the hearth-fire go out.' But there the fire was of peat, which will smoulder on untouched for many hours.

There was a stage of civilisation before the tinder-box came in, and that was a stage when fire had to be kept in, and if it went out, borrowed from a neighbour. In the earliest age, fire was obtained by friction; a piece of wood with a hole in it was placed on the ground between the feet. Then a man held a piece shaped like the letter T in his hands and rapidly twirled this about, with the long end inserted in the hole of the piece he held between his feet, till by friction the upright was ignited. The pieces of wood must be very dry, and requisite dryness was not easily procurable in our moist northern climes, consequently the labour of kindling a flame was proportionately great. Sometimes a wheel was employed, and the axle turned in that to produce a

flame. It has been thought that the *fylfot* †, the crook-legged cross found on so many monuments of antiquity, represents an instrument for the production of fire by friction. But owing to the great difficulty in producing fire by this means, the greatest possible care was taken of the household fire, lest it should become extinguished. This originated the worship of Vesta. The flame once procured was guarded against extinction in some central spot by the unmarried women of the house, and when villages and towns were formed, a central circular hut was erected in which a common fire was maintained, and watched continuously. From this central hearth all the hearths of the settlement were supplied. Ovid tells us that the first temple of Vesta at Rome was constructed of wattled walls and roofed with thatch like the primitive huts of the inhabitants. It was little other than a circular, covered fireplace, and was tended by the unmarried girls of the infant community. It served as the public hearth of Rome, and on it glowed, unextinguished throughout the year, the sacred fire, which was supposed to have been brought from Troy, and the continuance of which was thought to be linked with the fortunes of the city. The name Vesta is believed to be derived from the same root as the Sanskrit *vas*, which means 'to dwell, to inhabit,' and shows that she was the goddess of home, and home had the hearth as its focus. A town, a state, is but a large family, and what the domestic hearth was to the house, that the temple of the perpetual fire became to the city. Every town had its Vesta, or common hearth, and the colonies derived their fire from the mother hearth. Should a vestal maiden allow the sacred fire to become extinguished, she was beaten by the Grand Pontiff till her blood flowed, and the new fire was solemnly rekindled by rubbing together of dry wood, or by focussing of the sun's rays. It might not be borrowed. The circular form and domed roof of the Temples of Vesta were survivals of the prehistoric huts of the aborigines, which were invariably round.

Among the legends of the early Celtic saints nothing is more common than the story of the saint being sent to borrow fire, and carrying it in his lap without the fire injuring his garment.

In Ireland, before St. Patrick introduced Christianity, there was a temple at Tara, where fire burned ever, and was on no account suffered to go out.

When Christianity became dominant, it was necessary to dis-sociate the ideas of the people from the central fire as mixed up

with the old gods; at the same time some central fire was an absolute need. Accordingly the Church was converted into the sacred depository of the perpetual fire, and a lamp was kept in it ever burning, not only that the candles might be ignited from it for the services, without recourse had to friction or tinder, flint and steel, but also that the parish, the village, the town, might obtain thence their fire.

There exist still a few—a very few—contrivances for this perpetual fire in our churches; they go by the name of cresset-stones. The earliest I know is not in England, but is in the atrium outside the remarkable church of S. Ambrogio at Milan. It is a block of white marble on a moulded base, now broken, but banded together with iron. It stands three feet ten inches high, and is two feet six inches in diameter at top. It consists of a flat surface in which are depressed nine cuplike hollows. These were originally filled with oil, and wicks were placed in them and ignited. In England one is still *in situ*, in the church of Lewannick, in Cornwall. There it is not far from the door. It consists of a circular block containing on its flat upper surface, which is twenty-two inches across, seven cuplike hollows, four and a half inches deep. The stone stands on a rudely moulded base, octagonal, and is in all about two feet six inches high. In Furness Abbey, among the ruins, has been found another, with five cups in it; at Calder Abbey another, with sixteen such cups for oil and wicks. At York is another with six such fire-cups, and at Stockholm another with the same number, in a square stone table. At Wool Church, Dorset, is again another example built into the south wall of a small chapel on the north side of the chancel. It is a block of Purbeck marble, and has in the top five cup-shaped cavities quite blackened with the oil and smoke. In some of the examples there are traces of a metal pin around which the wick was twisted.

In addition to these, in several churches are to be found lamp-niches. Some have chimneys or flues, which pass upwards, in some cases passing into the chimneys of fireplaces. Others have conical hollows in the heads or roofs, in order to catch the soot, and prevent it passing out into the church.

Now, although these lamps and cressets had their religious signification, yet this religious signification was an afterthought. The origin of them lay in the necessity of there being in every place a central light, from which light could at any time be

borrowed; and the reason why this central light was put in the church was to dissociate it from the heathen ideas attached formerly to it. As it was, the good people of the Middle Ages were not quite satisfied with the central church fire, and they had recourse in times of emergency to others—and as the Church deemed them—unholy fires. When a plague and murrain appeared among cattle, then they lighted need-fires, from two pieces of dry wood, and drove the cattle between the flames, believing that this new flame was wholesome to the purging away of the disease. For kindling the need-fires the employment of flint and steel was forbidden. The fire was only efficacious when extracted in prehistoric fashion, out of wood. The lighting of these need-fires was forbidden by the Church in the eighth century. What shows that this need-fire was distinctly heathen is that in the Church new fire was obtained at Easter annually, by striking flint and steel together. It was supposed that the old fire in a twelvemonth had got exhausted, and that new fire must be imparted. Accordingly the priest solemnly struck new fire out of flint and steel. But fire from flint and steel was a novelty; and the people, pagan at heart, had no confidence in it, and in time of adversity went back to the need-fire kindled in the time-honoured way from wood by friction, before these new-fangled ways of drawing it out of stone and iron were invented.

There was a general popular observance of St. Blaize's day in England at one time. Apparently for no other reason than that the name of the saint suggested a fire, it was customary to make blazes on that day on hill-tops and other conspicuous places. Countrywomen went about during the day in idle, merry humour, and if they found a neighbour spinning, would snatch away the distaff and thrust it into the fire, to make a blaze with that.

We can well understand what puzzlement the fire was to primitive man. He could not make out its nature; was it a being, an animal, a god—or what?

It is, perhaps, hardly wonderful that he associated it with life; he could not understand what caused the animal heat of the body, and as he saw that when life departed the body waxed cold, he supposed that the human frame contained an internal flame or fire. Even in an Arabic romance, *Yokdan*, the hero, anxious to discover what life really is, opens the heart of an animal as it dies, and discovers a little blue flame which leaves the cavity of the heart as he observes it.

Corpse-candles are no other than human souls dancing over the graves where their bodies lie, or the souls of dead relatives coming to fetch those who are to rejoin them.

A poor family once had a sick child. A year before they had lost a child; now the second was ill. At night the father looked out of the window and saw a little flame come out of the church-yard gate and dance along the road, come to his door, and pass in. In another moment it was in the room and capered round the cradle. Instantly another little flame leaped from the mouth of the sick child, and the two blue lights went away together. When the father had kindled a lamp and looked at his sick child, he found that it was dead.

The following story was told me last year. In the summer of 1886 a young man, the son of the house, was engaged in the hay-harvest, though very delicate, and he died of a broken blood-vessel shortly after. When the hay harvest came in 1887, those engaged in it, in the evening, as soon as the sun had set, saw that they were attended by a blue flame, which ran about among the pokes of hay, danced beside the waggons as they conveyed the hay to the rick, and played on top of the rick beside those who were heaping it up. The farmer and his wife said that they knew very well that this was their John, 'who was wonderful fond of being in the hay-field, and had come back quite nat'ral like that year. Found it dull, mebbe, in the grave—no drinkings—and he were very partial to cyder.'

MISS HONOR'S WEDDING.

I.

OULD Sir Maurice's youngest daughther, do I mind her, Sir, did ye say?
 Miss Honor is it? Och, sure, the same as I'd sane her but yistherday;
 An' her weddin'—Ay, Sir, her weddin' I said. How long since?
 Well, I dunnó,
 But a matther o'tin yare back belike; anyway 't is wan while ago.

II.

We thought little inough o' the match here below in the town.
 Pagle said
 Miss Honor 'd a right to ha' looked at home, if so be she'd a mind to wed.
 There was plinty o' betther than he did be afther her thin, ye'll be bound,
 An' she reckoned the greatest beauty in the siven counties around.
 Yit she nades must take up wid a sthranger; I b'lave 'twas from Scotland he came.
 No, Sir, I ne'er chanced to behould him, an' I disremimber his name—
 A *big* man, I've hard tell, as yersilf's, Sir, an' plisint o' spache, but a bit
 Conthrary some whiles in his timper, an' come av a quare wild sit.
 Not aquil no ways to Miss Honor: sure, whin she'd be ridin' the road,
 As many's the time I've sane her, be the look av her no wan'd ha' knowed
 Whither 'twas to the Arl, or the Countiss, or ould Andy the fiddler, she bowed;
 A rael lady, tho', mind ye, some Quality thought her proud.

III.

Howsomiver, a sthranger or no, ould Sir Maurice was plased an' contint,
 An' they sittled to have a great weddin' down here at the indin' o' Lint;

An' I mind the white sloe-flower was miltin' from off the black
 hidges like hail
 In the sunshine, whin back to the Castle the family came wid a
 dale
 O' grand company, frinds an' relations; the house was as full as a
 fair.
 But, a couple o' days to the weddin', Kate Doyle, that's in sarvice
 up there,
 She run in wid a missage to say they'd a kitchin-maid tuk to her
 bed
 Wid the awfulest toothache at all, an' her cheek swilled the size
 av her head,
 An' they wanted a girl be the wake, an' she'd spoke to the Mistrhiss
 for me—
 So I slipped up that night afther supper, as proud o' me luck as
 could be.

IV.

Thin nixt day, whin they'd gone to the dinner, Kate showed me
 the grandeur they'd got
 Sittled out in the library: all av her prisints, a tarrible lot.
 Sure, I couldn't be tellin' ye half, lit alone nare the whoule o' the
 things.
 There was wan o' the tables was covered wid bracelits, an'
 brooches, an' rings;
 An' the big silver plates did be shinin' like so many moons thro
 the mist;
 An' the joogs wid their insides pure gould, an' the taypots, an'
 arns, an' the rist.
 But the iligint chayney—och saints! the wee cups wid the handles
 all gilt,
 An' their paintins o' flower-wrathes an' birds—if ye'd break wan,
 bedad, ye'd be kilt.
 An' the jools, och! the jools was that purty, I'd ha' sted there star-
 gazin' all night;
 There was diminds like raindhrops that aich had a fire-sparkle
 somehow alight,
 An' the parls like as if they'd been sthringin' the bits o' round
 hailstones for bades,
 An' the rid wans an' green, if a rainbow was sowin' ye'd take them
 for sades;

An' the grand little boxes to hould thim, all lined wid smooth satin below—

'Sure, it's well to be her, Kate,' sez I, an' sez she : ' Och, begorra, that's so.'

V.

Will, the morn, be the bist o' good luck, Kate an' I got the chanst to slip out,

An' away wid us off to the Charch, where the folk was all standin' about,

Tho' it wanted an hour to the time, an' we squazed to a sate at the door,

That was thralled round most tasty wid wrathes that they'd putt up the avenin' before.

An' it's there we'd the greatest divarsion behouldin', for after a while,

All the guists was arrivin' an' roostlin' in vilvits an' silks up the aisle,

Ivery wan lookin' finer than t'other, wid sthramers, an' fithers, an' lace—

But the sorra a sign o' the bridegroom was sane comin' nigh to the place.

That was sthrange now ; an' folk did be sayin' they wondhered what kep' him, an' thin

It samed Quality's silves got onaisy, for ye'd see the grand bonnits begin

Niddle-noddlin' together to whusper ; an' wan o' the gintlemin 'd quit,

Slippin' out be the little side door, an' look down the sthraight road for a bit,

An' come back, blinkin' out o' the sun, wid a head-shake, for nothin' he'd spied ;

Till at last, in the thick o' their throuble, in landed Miss Honor—the bride.

VI.

Och, an' she was a bride ! Not a sowl but was wishin' good luck to her groom.

All in white, like a branch o' wild pear, whin ye scarce see the stim for the bloom,

An' her dark hair just glintin' wid glames, like the bird's wing
 that strakes off the dew—
 Och, a beauty complate, from the crown av her head to the point
 av her shoe.
 Wid her hand on Sir Maurice's arm, an' he lookin' as proud as ye
 plase,
 An' eight iligint bridesmaids behind her, aich pair dhrissed as like
 as two pase,
 Wid their booquees o' flowers like big stars in a thrimble o' farn
 laves; ye'd say
 Be the scint they'd dhropped sthraight out av hiven; I remimber
 the smill to this day.

VII.

But, nixt minyit, in afther thim stipped a sthrane gintlemin none
 av us knew,
 In a tarrible takin', an' pantin' as if 'twas a bellers he blew;
 Wid a yallerish slip in his hand o' the sort they've for missages
 tuk
 Off the tiligrumph wires, an' he ups to where Quality stared at
 him, sthruck
 Av a hape like; an' somethin' he sez, that I couldn't exactuallly
 hare,
 But a somethin' the others weren't wishful Miss Honor should
 guiss, that was clare,
 For they all wint hush-hushin'; howiver, I'm thinkin' she hard
 what he said,
 An' I saw her take hould o' the paper, an' whatever was in it she
 read.

VIII.

I misdoubt what's the thruth o' the story. Some said all the
 while he'd a wife
 In the States unbekownst, that was somehow found out, so he'd
 run for his life;
 An' some said he was coortin' a Marquis's daughther in England
 instead;
 But some said it was naught on'y just a fantigue he'd tuk into his
 head.
 But whatever the raison might be, an' whatever had happint amiss,
 The ind av it was, he was niver sit eyes on from that day to this.

IX.

Sure now, Quality's quare in their ways: Whin me cousin ran off
to inlist,
Throth, the bawls av his mother an' sisthers were fit to ha' frightened
the bist;
An' last winther whin Norah Macabe had hard tell that her swate-
heart was dhrowned,
It's her scrames 'ud ha' tirrorified nations—ye'd hare thim a good
mile o' ground.
But, Miss Honor, as still an' as quiet she tarned back be the way
that she came,
Down the aisle, past the pews wid the pape set starin' in rows just
the same;
An' right out to the shine o' the sun, that should niver ha' lit on
her head
Till she walked wid a ring on her hand, an' the girls sthrewin'
flowers where she'd thread.
So she passed thro' the yard, where the folk all kep' whisht as the
dead in their graves;
Not a sound in the world save the flutther o' win' thro' the
ivergreen laves,
An' a lark somewhere singin' like wild up above in the clare light
alone,
Till the carriage dhruv off from the gate, an' we hard the whales
grate, on the stone.
Thin ould Molly O'Rourke, that stood by wid her head in her
raggety cloak:
'Now, the Saints may purtect her,' sez she, 'for the heart o' the
crathur is broke.'

X.

An' sure maybe ould Molly was right; I dunnó, for they tuk her
away
To distract av her mind, so they said, to some counthries far over
the say;
Some most quarious onnathural place, where I'm tould the sun's
scorchin' an' hot
All the yare, an' the pape is mostly ould naygurs as black as the
pot;

An' a sthrame thro' it full o' thim bastes o' great riptiles that
swally ye whoule,
Wid the disolit diserts around, where ye'll see ne'er the sight av
a sowl;
Warser land than the blackest o' bogs, just as bare as the palm o'
yer hand,
Savin' whiles barbarocious big imiges sthuck in the midst o' the
sand,
An' gazabos o' stones stuffed wid bones o' the hayjus ould haythins
inside—
Ay, in Agypt—belike that's the name. But, at all ivints, there
she died.

XI.

Yis, she died, Sir; an' there she was buried, she niver sit fut here
agin;
An' it's naught but the thruth that her like I've not looked on
afore her or sin'.
An' bad luck thin to thim that 'ud harm her. A pity—a pity,
bedad,
If ye come to considther the plisure in life she'd a right to ha'
had.
So in Spring, whin the hidges is greenin', an' cuckoos beginnin'
to call,
Poor Miss Honor I mind, an' her weddin', that was niver a weddin'
at all.

COURIERS OF THE AIR.

THE power of flight being almost exclusively the characteristic attribute of birds, it is somewhat strange that even the most eminent naturalists should be silent upon it. And yet this is almost universally so. Those that mention the speed of flight do so upon the most insufficient evidence, as witness Michelet's statement that the swallow flies at the rate of eighty leagues an hour. Roughly, this gives a thousand miles in four hours; but assuredly, even in its dashes, the swallow does not attain to anything like this speed. The Duke of Argyll is rather under than over the mark when he computes the speed at more than a hundred miles an hour. The mechanism of flight, however, in the swallows is carried through an ascending scale, until in the swift it reaches its highest degree of power, both in endurance and facility of evolution. Although there are birds which may, and probably do, attain to a speed of 150 miles an hour, this remarkable rate is not to be looked for in any of the birds of the swallow kind. There is something fascinating in the idea of eliminating time and space, and with this attribute popular fancy has in some measure clothed the swallows. At the greater rate of speed indicated above the swallow might, as has been stated, breakfast round the Barbican, and take its midday *siesta* in Algiers. This, however, is a popular myth. In their migrations swallows stick close to land, and never leave it unless compelled; they cross straits at the narrowest part, and are among the most fatiguable of birds. From this it will be seen that, although they may possess considerable speed, they have no great powers of sustained flight or endurance. These attributes belong, in the most marked degree, to several ocean birds.

Anyone who has crossed the Atlantic must have noticed that gulls accompany the ship over the whole distance; or, at least, are never absent throughout the voyage. The snowy 'sea-swallows,' as the terns are called, seem quite untiring on the wing; though the petrels and albatross alone deserve the name of oceanic birds. Sir Edwin Arnold, in an account of his voyage to America, writes as follows of the sea-swallows: 'Every day we see playing round the ship and skimming up and down the wave-

hollows companies of lovely little terns and sea-swallows, the latter no larger than thrushes. These fearless people of the waste have not by any means followed us from land, living, as gulls often will, on the waste thrown from the vessel. They are vague and casual roamers of the ocean, who, spying the great steamship from afar, have sailed close up, to see if we are a rock or an island, and will then skim away on their own free and boundless business. Yonder tiny bird with purple and green plumage, his little breast and neck laced with silver, is distant 1,000 miles at this moment from a drop of fresh water, and yet cares no more for that fact than did the Irish squire who "lived twelve miles from a lemon." If his wings ever grow weary, it is but to settle quietly on the bosom of a great billow and suffer it for a time to rock and roll him amid the hissing spendrift, the milky flying foam, and the broken sea-lace which forms, and gleams, and disappears again upon the dark slopes. When he pleases, a stroke of the small red foot and a beat of the wonderful wing launch him off from the jagged edge of his billow, and he flits past us at 100 knots an hour, laughing steam and canvas to scorn, and steering for some nameless crag in Labrador or Fundy, or bound, it may be, homeward for some island or marsh of the far-away Irish coast. Marvellously expressive as is our untiring engine, which all day and all night throbs and pants and pulses in noisy rhythm under the deck, what a clumsy affair it is compared to the dainty plumes and delicate muscles which carry that pretty, fearless sea-swallow back to his roost!

No deserts seem to bound the range of the petrels, and they are found at every distance from land. Different species inhabit every ocean, from the fulmar in the far north to the giant petrel which extends its flight to the ice-banks of the south. Here the Antarctic and snowy petrels appear, often floating upon the drift ice, and never leaving these dreary seas. Another bird of immense wing-power is the tiny stormy petrel, the smallest web-footed bird known. It belongs to every sea, and although so seeming frail, it breasts the utmost fury of the storm, skimming with incredible velocity the trough of the waves, and gliding rapidly over their snowy crests. Petrels have been observed 2,000 miles from nearest land, whilst at half that distance Sir James Ross once saw a couple of penguins quietly paddling in the sea. A pair of the rudimentary wings of this bird are lying before me as I write. These are simply featherless paddles; but by their aid so rapidly does the

bird swim that it almost defies many of the fishes to equal it. The enormous appetite of the giant penguin (which weighs about eighty pounds) may have something to do with its restricted powers of flight, and in the stomach of one of these Ross found ten pounds of quartz, granite, and trap fragments, swallowed most likely to promote digestion.

But surely the lord of the winged race is the bird which does not rest, and this may almost be said of the man-of-war or frigate-bird. He is a navigator who never reaches his bourne, and from his almost ceaseless flight it would seem as though earth and sea were equally prohibited to him. To a bird with such immense and superior wing apparatus, the metaphor, 'he sleeps upon the storm,' almost becomes literal. This black, solitary bird is nearly nothing more than wings, his prodigious pinions measuring fifteen feet, and even surpassing those of the condor of the Andes. Although sometimes seen 400 leagues from land, the frigate-bird is said to return every night to its solitary roost.

Of all birds the albatross has perhaps the most extended powers of flight. It has been known to follow a vessel for several successive days without once touching the water, except to pick up floating food; and even then it does not settle. In describing the flight of this bird from personal observation Captain Hutton writes as follows: 'The flight of the albatross is truly majestic, as with outstretched motionless wings he sails over the surface of the sea, now rising high in the air, now with a bold sweep, and wings inclined at an angle with the horizon, descending until the tip of the lower one all but touches the crest of the waves as he skims over them. I have sometimes watched narrowly one of these birds sailing and wheeling about in all directions for more than an hour without seeing the slightest movement of the wings, and have never witnessed anything to equal the ease and grace of this bird as he sweeps past, often within a few yards—every part of his body perfectly motionless except the head and eye, which turn slowly and seem to take notice of everything.

"Tranquil its spirit seemed and floated slow;
Even in its very motion there was rest."

But these birds and the frigate-bird are sea and ocean species, and, with rare exceptions, are able to rest upon the waters. This, however, cannot be said of many of the land birds, and here observation is easier.

As an antithesis to the apparently lifeless wings of the albatross, Pettigrew compares the ceaseless activity of those of the humming-bird. In these delicate and exquisitely beautiful birds, the wings, according to Mr. Gould, move so rapidly when the bird is poised before an object that it is impossible for the eye to follow each stroke, and a hazy circle of indistinctness on each side of the bird is all that is perceptible. When a humming-bird flies in a horizontal direction it occasionally proceeds with such velocity as altogether to elude observation. Mention of the calm majestic flight of the albatross suggests the possibility of birds resting on the wing. An American naturalist asserts that birds of prey and some others have the power to lock securely together those parts of the wing holding the extended feathers, and corresponding to the fingers of the human hand. The action of the air on the wing in this condition extends the elbow, which is prevented from opening too far by a cartilage, and the wings may keep this position for an indefinite length of time, with no muscular action whatever on the part of the bird. While resting in this way the bird cannot rise in a still atmosphere; but if there be a horizontal current, it may allow itself to be carried along by it, with a slight tendency downward, and so gain a momentum by which, with a slight change of direction, it may rise to some extent, still without muscular action of the wings. This same naturalist also believes it quite possible for birds to sleep on the wing. As bearing on this subject, Professor J. S. Newberry asserts that he once shot a bird, which came slowly to the ground as if still flying, but reached it dead. He believed that it had died high in the air, but he had never been able to account for the manner of its descent till now, when he found an explanation in the statement just given.

Thousands of gold-crests annually cross and recross the North Sea at the wildest period of the year, and, unless the weather is rough, generally make their migrations in safety. And yet this is the smallest and frailest British bird—a mere fluff of feathers, and weighing only seventy grains. Another of the tits, the ox-eye, has been met upon two occasions at 600 and 900 miles from land. With regard to those birds which cross the Atlantic, it matters not for our purpose whether they are driven by stress of weather or cross voluntarily; suffice it, they come. Less likely birds that have occurred in Britain are the belted kingfisher and the American yellow-billed cuckoo. The white-winged crossbill must be mentioned with less certainty, for, although it is a

North American bird, it is also found in some northern European countries.

All birds of great and sustained powers of flight have one well-marked characteristic—they have long wings, with sharply pointed ends. And the general truth of this will be at once admitted if the rule be applied to the various species mentioned above. Another point is worthy of notice. The apparent speed of flight to an unpractised eye is most deceptive. A heron, as it rises and flaps languidly along the course of a brook, appears not only to progress slowly, but to use its wings in like manner. And yet the Duke of Argyll has pointed out, and anyone may verify the statement by his watch, that the heron seldom flaps his wings at a rate of less than from 120 to 150 times in a minute. This is counting only the downward strokes, so that the bird really makes from 240 to 300 separate movements a minute. Our short-winged game-birds fly with incredible velocity, and any attempt to observe or count their wing movements leaves but a blurred impression upon the eye; whilst in some species so quick is the vibratory movement as to prevent its being seen. Driven grouse, flying 'down wind,' have been known to seriously stun sportsmen by falling upon their heads. A grouse does not move its wings so rapidly as a partridge, though the late C. S. was once clean knocked out of a battery by a grouse he had shot falling upon him; and in this way loaded guns have frequently been fired by dead birds. The Duke of Beaufort upon one occasion picked up a brace of grouse which had canoned and killed each other in mid-air, and colliding is not an unfrequent occurrence. As illustrating the above qualities of flight, the case of the kestrel, or windover, may be taken. On a summer day one may frequently see this pretty little falcon standing against the blue, in what seems an absolutely stationary position, as though suspended by an invisible silken thread. But let a meadow-mouse so much as move, and it drops to the sward in an instant.

As has been already stated, there is nothing more wonderful in nature than the power of flight possessed by birds, and no subject which yields such startling facts upon investigation. 'The way of an eagle in the air' is one of those things of which Solomon expressed himself ignorant; and there is something truly marvellous in the mechanism which controls the scythe-like sweep of wing peculiar to most birds of prey. The noblest of these, the peregrine, has been seen flying over mid-Atlantic; and Henri IV.,

King of France, had a falcon which escaped from Fontainebleau, and in twenty-four hours after was found in Malta, a space computed to be at not less than 1,350 miles, a velocity equal to fifty-six miles an hour, supposing the hawk to have been on the wing the whole time. Indeed, in Montagu's opinion, the rapidity with which a hawk and many other birds occasionally fly is probably not less than at the rate of 150 miles an hour, when either pursued or pursuing. The speed of flight of the peregrine, cited above, is about that of our best trained pigeons; and it may here be remarked that the flight of these two (otherwise dissimilar) birds very much resembles each other. The beautiful swallow-tailed kite has accomplished the feat of flying across the whole Atlantic Ocean, which is hardly to be wondered at, seeing its vast powers of flight. The best speed of a railway train is only a little more than half the velocity of the golden eagle, the flight of which often attains to the rate of 140 miles an hour. Of all birds, the condor mounts highest into the atmosphere. Humboldt describes the flight of this bird in the Andes to be at least 20,000 feet above the level of the sea. Upon one occasion a falcon was observed to cut a snipe right in two, with such strength and speed did it cut down its prey. Sparrow-hawks and merlins have not unfrequently been known to crash through thick plate-glass windows when in pursuit of prey, or at caged birds.

Of all British birds, none is so beautiful or so secluded in its habits as the kingfisher. Its presence is peculiarly in keeping with the rapid, rocky trout-streams which it loves to haunt. Its low, arrow-like flight, as it darts like a streak of azure, green, and gold, is familiar to every angler. He hears it far down stream; it comes under the old ivied bridge, passes like a flash, and is gone—how quickly, the following will show. Mr. George Rooper, the biographer of the salmon, was travelling on the Great Western Railway, which between Pangbourne and Reading runs parallel with and close to the Thames. As the train approached the river, a kingfisher started from the bank and flew along the river for nearly a mile. Mr. Rooper watched it the whole distance, and its relative position with the window never varied a yard, the bird flying at exactly the same pace as that at which the train travelled, and which the observer had just previously ascertained to be fifty-five miles an hour. This is about half the speed at which the eider-duck flies, as, when fairly on the wing, it makes upwards of 120 miles an hour. The rapidity with which all birds

of the plover-kind fly is well known, and a trip of golden plover have been seen midway between Hawaii and the mainland. An officer in Donald Currie's line recently brought home with him a specimen of the St. Helena waxbill, which he caught when on watch on the bridge of the 'Grantully Castle.' At the time the nearest land was distant 1,000 miles, and the little captive was so distressed that it quietly allowed the officer to capture it.

To the short-winged birds a contrast is afforded by the rook and heron, which flap languidly along in almost straight lines. These have large rounded wings, and float with the greatest ease upon the air. The rook, in its measured flight, makes about five-and-twenty miles an hour; the heron thirty.

It has been computed that a red-throated diver swims about four and a half miles on the surface of the water, and between six and seven beneath the surface, per hour. Macgillivray states that upon one occasion he watched a flock of red mergansers pursuing sand-eels, when the birds seemed to move under the water with almost as much velocity as in the air, and often rose to breathe at a distance of 200 yards from the spot at which they had dived. To show to what depth this bird flies beneath the water, it may be mentioned that one was caught in a net at thirty fathoms; while a shag, or green cormorant, has been caught in a crab-pot fixed at twenty fathoms below the surface. As bearing directly on the interesting subject of flight under water, the case of another of the divers may be mentioned. It has been said that one of the strong strokes of Nature was when she made the 'loon'—a bird which represents the wildness and solitariness of the wildest and most solitary spots. It dives with such marvellous quickness that the shot of the gunner gets there just in time 'to cut across a circle of descending tail-feathers and a couple of little jets of water flung upward by the web feet of the loon.' Speaking of this bird, Borrow says that in the water 'its wings are more than wings. It plunges into the denser air, and flies with incredible speed. Its head and beak form a sharp point to its tapering neck. Its wings are far in front and its legs equally far in the rear, and its course through the crystal depths is like the speed of an arrow. In the northern lakes it has been taken forty feet under water upon hooks baited for the large lake trout. I had never seen one till last fall, when one appeared on the river in front of my house. I knew instantly it was the loon. Who could not tell a loon a half-mile or more away, though he had

never seen one before? The river was like glass, and every movement of the bird as it sported about broke the surface into ripples, that revealed it far and wide. Presently a boat shot out from shore, and went ripping up the surface toward the loon. The creature at once seemed to divine the intentions of the boatman, and sided off obliquely, keeping a sharp look-out as if to make sure it was pursued. A steamer came down and passed between them, and when the way was again clear the loon was still swimming on the surface. Presently it disappeared under the water, and the boatman pulled sharp and hard. In a few moments the bird reappeared some rods further on, as if to make an observation. Seeing it was being pursued, and no mistake, it dived quickly, and when it came up again had gone many times as far as the boat had in the same space of time. Then it dived again, and distanced its pursuer so easily that he gave over the chase and rested upon his oars. But the bird made a final plunge, and when it emerged upon the surface again it was over a mile away. Its course must have been, and doubtless was, an actual flight under water, and half as fast as the crow flies in the air. The loon would have delighted the old poets. Its wild, demoniac laughter awakens the echoes on the solitary lakes, and its ferity and hardness were kindred to those robust spirits.'

Another specially interesting bird, which does something nearly approaching to flying under water, is the dipper. The ouzel is essentially a bird of the running brook, though what part this pretty white-breasted thrush plays in the economy of nature naturalists are by no means agreed. Its most frequent stand is some mossy stone in a river reach, and here its crescented form may oftenest be seen. It haunts the brightly running streams in winter as in summer, and when these are transformed into roaring torrents seems to love them best. Let us watch it awhile. It dashes through the spray and into the white foam, performing its morning ablutions. Then it emerges to perch on a stone, always jerking its body about, and dipping, dipping—ever dipping. Presently it melts into the water like a bubble, but immediately emerges to regain its seat; then trills out a loud, wren-like song, but, breaking off short, again disappears. We are standing on an old stone bridge, and are enabled to observe it closely. By a rapid vibratory motion of the wings it drives itself down through the water, and by the aid of its wide-spreading feet clings to and walks among the pebbles. These it rapidly turns over with its

bill, searching for the larvæ of water-flies and gauzy-winged *ephemeræ*. It searches the brook carefully downwards, sometimes clean immersed, at other times with its back out, then with the water barely covering its feet. It does not always work with the stream, as we have frequently seen it struggling against it, but even now retaining its position upon the bottom. Even at the present day there are naturalists who, from the examination of cabinet specimens, aver that it is not in the power of the bird to walk on the bottom of the brook, but then they know nothing of it along its native streams.

Taking advantage of two birds remarkable for their long and sustained powers of flight, experiments have recently been conducted with a view to utilising swallows and pigeons as war messengers. In this connection the use of trained pigeons is one of the oldest institutions in the world; though now that certain European powers have trained falcons to cut down the pigeons, it is said that the pigeon-post is not sufficiently reliable. In consequence a number of French *savants* recently approached the Minister of War, and induced him to found a military Swallow-Cote, whence the birds might be trained. The Governor of Lille was charged to test the plan, and certain experiments made at Roubaix last year were commanded to be repeated under the supervision of Captain Degouy, of the Engineers. During the late autumn this gentleman was to be present at a grand flight of messenger swallows; and if his report is favourable, a Swallow-Cote will be founded and placed under the care of special trainers at Mont Valérien. The idea of engaging swallows in war is a pretty one, as, in future, all European wars will have to be conducted in 'swallow time'—when the warm winds blow from the sunny south. This arrangement will at least obviate night-watches in frozen trenches, nor is it likely that pickets will any longer be starved to death at their posts. The incident is also quoted in proof of the fact that we are nearing the time when Europe will be governed by a 'Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World.' But, after all, the idiosyncrasies of France have a way of not being fulfilled; and the reign of the swallow will, doubtless, be as ephemeral as has been that of the *brav' Général* himself. In all their military operations of late the French have made considerable use of pigeons in conveying despatches, and in the Franco-German war the birds played a conspicuous part. Upon several occasions, indeed, the inhabitants of beleaguered cities looked upon the

successful flights of these birds as their only hope betwixt death and starvation.

At the time the French were making trials with messenger swallows, the young German Emperor ordered extensive experiments to be carried out with carrier-pigeons, the same to be tested at the Imperial manœuvres. Upon this six of the first Columbarian societies of Germany each offered to supply twenty-four birds, which are now in training. So that we have it that the French are endeavouring to train swallows, the Germans pigeons, and the Russians falcons. Whether the falcons are themselves to convey messages, or are to be used to cut down the swallows and pigeons whilst so engaged, is not stated. The pigeon, then, is a tried messenger, and has, moreover, some interesting and remarkable records. The claim of the swallow, on the other hand, lies all in its possibilities. In this connection 'swallow' must stand in a generic sense, and include all birds of the swallow-kind as well as the swift. Although, as already stated, swallows are among the most fatiguable of birds, yet one of the American species—the Purple Martin—would seem to be an exception, and the fact of its having crossed the Atlantic is well known. It is true that swallows attain to an immense speed in their rushes, and there is a well-authenticated instance of one having flown twenty miles in thirteen minutes. The probable speed of the swallow, flying straight and swift, is about 110 miles an hour; its ordinary speed 100 miles. The swift attains to 200 miles, and seems quite tireless on the wing. If swifts can be inspired with a sense of discipline; if French wars can invariably be arranged for the summer months; and if some arrangement can be made with the insect hosts to keep the upper air—*then* something may come of the Lille experiments. If these things cannot be, the French sharpshooter will never be asked to try flying shots at swifts, rushing through the air at the rate of 200 miles an hour.

If the Russians are training falcons to catch pigeons, the Germans must train raptors to catch swallows—and here is a fact which proves the possibility. The Hobby falcon, a summer migrant to Britain, hawks for dragon-flies—among the swiftest of insects—which it seizes with its foot and devours in mid-air. It cuts down swifts, larks, pigeons, and, where they are found, bee-birds—all remarkable for their great powers of flight. By way of testing the speed of flight in birds of the swallow kind, Spallanzani captured and marked a sand-martin or bank-swallow—the feeblest of its

genus—on her nest at Pavia and set her free at Milan, fifteen miles away. She flew back in thirteen minutes. In striking contrast with the rate at which birds with long pointed wings fly is the fact that one of a pair of starlings (which are short-winged birds) was captured and sent in a basket a distance of upwards of thirty miles by train. It was then freed, and was three hours before it found its way back to its nestlings.

To turn from swallows to pigeons. The power of pigeons on the wing is proverbial. All trained birds of this species have two qualifications in a marked degree. The first is speed, the second long and sustained powers of flight. This proposition can be amply demonstrated, and the following are some of the most remarkable records. On October 6, 1850, Sir John Ross despatched a pair of young pigeons from Assistance Bay, a little west of Wellington Sound; and on October 13 a pigeon made its appearance at the dovecote in Ayrshire, Scotland, whence Sir John had the pair he took out. The distance direct between the two places is 2,000 miles. An instance is on record of a pigeon flying twenty-three miles in eleven minutes, and another flew from Rouen to Ghent, 150 miles, in an hour and a half. An interesting incident of flight is the case of a pigeon which, in 1845, fell wounded and exhausted at Vauxhall Station, then the terminus of the South-Western Railway. It bore a message to the effect that it was one of three despatched to the Duke of Wellington from Ichaboe Island, 2,000 miles away. The message was immediately sent on to his Grace, and by him acknowledged. In a pigeon competition some years ago the winning-bird flew from Ventnor to Manchester, 208 miles, at the rate of fifty miles an hour. As an experiment a trained pigeon was recently despatched from a northern newspaper office with a request that it might be liberated for its return journey at 9.45 a.m. It reached home at 1.10 p.m., having covered in the meantime 140 miles, flying at the rate of forty miles an hour. In the north pigeons have long been used to convey messages between country houses and market towns, and in Russia they are now being employed to convey negatives of photographs taken in balloons. The first experiment of the kind was made from the cupola of the Cathedral of Isaac, and the subject photographed was the Winter Palace. The plates were packed in envelopes impenetrable to light, and then tied to the feet of the pigeons, which safely and quickly carried them to the station at Volkovo. Here is another interesting instance of speed and stay-

ing power. The pigeons in question flew from Bordeaux to Manchester, and not only beat all existing records, but flew more than seventy miles further than anything previously attempted by English flyers. The winning bird flew at the rate of 1,879 yards a minute, or over sixty-four miles an hour, and that for a distance of $142\frac{1}{2}$ miles. The same club has flown birds distances of 613 and 625 miles. These latter, however, were several days in returning, and in their case the only wonder is that they could accomplish the distance at all. The following is still more interesting, as it entailed a race between birds and insects. A pigeon-fancier of Hamme, in Westphalia, made a wager that a dozen bees liberated three miles from their hive would reach it in better time than a dozen pigeons would reach their cot from the same distance. The competitors were given wing at Rhyndern, a village nearly a league from Hamme, and the first bee finished a quarter of a minute in advance of the first pigeon, three other bees reached the goal before the second pigeon, the main body of both detachments finishing almost simultaneously an instant or two later. The bees, too, may be said to have been handicapped in the race, having been rolled in flour before starting for purposes of identification.

The American passenger pigeon compasses the whole Atlantic ocean. The speed of its flight is approximately known, and it is able to cover 1,600 miles in twenty-four hours. This, indeed, is marvellous, when it is seen that, flying at the rate of nearly seventy miles an hour, it takes the bird two days and nights to cross. What must be the nature of the mechanism that can stand such a strain as this? This pigeon is now recognised as a British bird. Several examples have occurred, and whilst some of these were probably 'escapes,' others doubtless were wild birds. These had perfect plumage, were taken in an exhausted condition, and their crops showed only the slightest traces of food. As is well known, the passenger pigeon is a bird of immense powers of flight, and in its overland journey often flies at the rate of a mile a minute. Wild birds, however, can only come from America; and this opens up the interesting question as to the possibility of birds crossing the Atlantic without once resting. Naturalists of the present day say that this feat is not only probable, but that it is accomplished by several birds. Mr. Darwin somewhere asserts that one or two of them are annually blown across the ocean; and it is certain that half-a-dozen species have occurred upon the west coasts of England and Ireland, which are found nowhere but in

North America. Mr. Howard Saunders states that passenger pigeons are often captured in the State of New York with their crops still filled with the undigested grains of rice that must have been taken in the distant fields of Georgia and South Carolina, apparently proving that they must have passed over the intervening space within a few hours. It certainly seems remarkable that a bird should have the power of winging its way over 4,000 miles of sea; but recently two persons have recorded the fact that they have noticed pigeons settle upon the water to drink, and then rise from it with apparent ease. And Mr. Darwin says that, where the banks of the Nile are perpendicular, whole flocks of pigeons have been seen to settle on the water and drink while they floated down the stream. He adds that, seen from a distance, they resembled flocks of gulls on the surface of the sea. The passenger pigeon is one of the handsomest of its kind. The accounts of its migrations in search of food are known to all. It is said to move in such vast flocks as to darken the earth as they pass over, and that one of these columns brings devastation wherever it comes.

In the Anglo-Belgian pigeon races some of the birds attain to nearly a mile a minute, and this when the race is for 500 miles. The English, French, and Germans all rear pigeons in their fortresses, and the birds are utilised by the Trinity House in conveying messages from the lightships. They are also used on the Indian stations. The following are other remarkable instances of quick and long-sustained powers of flight, which show what the pigeon is capable of doing. Thirty-three birds were recently brought from Termonde, in Belgium, and were liberated at Sunderland at 5 a.m. A telegram received at the latter place stated that sixteen of the birds reached home at 1.35 the same afternoon, having accomplished a distance of 480 miles in about eight and a half hours, or about fifty-six miles an hour. A week previous the same birds had flown from London to Brussels.

It has frequently been suggested that homing pigeons should be used to carry telegraphic messages between country-houses and post-offices. In many cases pigeons have been used as telegraphic messengers, with the most successful results. Sending into town by the people of the Hall is a frequent occurrence; and whenever a messenger has occasion to go, some pigeons, bred at the Hall, are sent in a hamper by the dog-cart or what-not. These are taken possession of by a local tradesman living near the post-office, who also receives the telegrams. These are

rolled up and tied either around the bird's leg, or so that it lies across the upper part of its breast. The pigeon is then liberated, and in about ten minutes from the time of despatch the telegram is delivered at the Hall, five miles distant. The reverse process is repeated with the tradesman's pigeons kept at the Hall if a reply to the telegram just received is required. The platform leading into the pigeon-house is connected with an electric bell, that rings when the pigeon reaching home alights on the platform, and thus notifies the servants of the arrival of a telegram; one of them then goes and unties it from the bird's neck. Much saving in portage is thus accomplished; the telegrams are delivered in a few minutes, and rarely, if ever, lost. The ordinary homing pigeon is best adapted for the purpose, and is an inexpensive purchase.

In proof of this the following most remarkable incident may be recorded. A number of English homers were recently sent to Lassey, an inland town of France, but for some reason the French police authorities refused to start them, and the birds were relegated to Cherbourg, where they were liberated at 7 a.m. One of them was seen to alight on the roof of its loft at 11:30 the same forenoon. It had accomplished the entire distance of about 300 miles, including 100 miles of water, in a bee-line from Cherbourg to Birkenhead, at the rate of over a mile a minute. This particular bird had never been any great distance from home, and although English bred it was from a famous strain of Belgian 'homers.' The large provincial towns of the north of England are the great centres of pigeon-flying. Recently as many as 2,500 birds were liberated at a flight. All these pigeons were out of sight in one minute from the time they were thrown up, a fact which shows how strong is the 'homing' instinct within them. The homing pigeon may not supersede the telegraph, but in disturbed times it is the business of an enemy to cut the wires, to tap them, or even to send misleading despatches along them. No such danger need be apprehended from a carrier-pigeon, for, if well trained, it will fly from loft to loft, never parting with its tiny scroll unless killed or taken—a mishap which is not likely to befall more than one or two of a flock. As already stated, some remarkable results have already been achieved, not only by Government birds, whose performances and proceedings are of course kept quiet, but by those belonging to the numerous carrier-pigeon societies which have

been established on the Continent, either for mere amusement or with more patriotic objects in view. Thus, some years ago a homing pigeon covered the 615 miles—air-line—between Liège, in Belgium, and San Sebastian, in Spain, in the course of a single day; and in the United States as much as 500 miles have been traversed in from twenty-four to twenty-eight hours. That is, the birds were absent from loft to loft for that period. But, as the progress of the pigeon from one station to another cannot be accurately followed, it may have halted on the way. The bird is believed to travel the first day without stopping, and being stiff and sore, to rest the second day, resuming its journey on the third, since it is seldom that 'a return' comes back travel-stained or wearied.

When the rearing and training of carrier-pigeons for French military service was seriously undertaken, the first thing to be done was to find a breed of birds at once intelligent, hardy, strong, and light on the wing, and of a dull, uniform colour, likely to escape notice and pursuit. All these attributes are possessed by the Belgian breed, which is divided into two classes—the large, heavy Antwerp; and the smaller, lighter Luttich variety. The scientific training, which must be begun early, is as follows:—As soon as the young pigeons can fly, they are taken out of the pigeon-house, put into a basket, and carried (always with the flying-hole of the basket kept carefully turned towards the pigeon-house) to an unknown spot at a short distance, where they are set free and left to fly home. It is seldom that a pigeon fails, in the first short trial, to find its way back to its paternal nest. At each trial the distance is slightly lengthened. Pigeons six months old are liberated at a distance of eighty kilometres from home, those a year old at 150 kilometres, those of two years old at 300 kilometres, and older, tried birds at 600 to 800 kilometres. These, of course, are average measurements, and are varied according to circumstance. The percentage of losses naturally increases with the increasing distance. In long flights the birds meet with innumerable hindrances. Rain, hail, fogs, wind, and thunderstorms not only impede their flight, but often affect their wonderful sense of locality and direction. The birds are remarkably sensitive to electricity, so that thunderstorms are peculiarly baffling to them, and large forests, great extents of water, and ranges of mountains influence and alter the upper air-currents, by the direction of which the pigeons, taught by some marvellous instinct, are able to steer their course. The average speed of a

pigeon is reckoned at a kilomètre a minute, and on this basis, and taking into consideration the time of year, length of daylight, weather, &c., calculations are made of the distance a pigeon can be sent. In summer, when daylight begins at half-past three in the morning and lasts till half-past eight at night, a trained pigeon can do about 1,000 kilomètres in a day; while, on a foggy November day, when the daylight begins late and darkness comes on early, the same bird cannot accomplish more than 400 kilomètres. One great drawback hitherto attendant on the use of pigeons has been the supposed impossibility of making them fly backwards and forwards between two points; they would only fly in one direction. Now, however, Captain Malogoli, the head of the Italian military carrier-pigeon depôts, has, after immense and unwearying trouble, succeeded in getting his pigeons to fly backwards and forwards between Rome and Civita Vecchia (seventy-two kilomètres). This practical success has shattered the theories of various ornithologists, such as Russ, who have affirmed that pigeons cannot be made to fly in two directions. The chief points to be observed in the rearing of pigeons are: roomy, warm houses, facing toward the sun, scrupulous cleanliness, light food, and abundance of clean, fresh water. The smaller the bird, and the quieter its colour, the better chance it stands of safety from human and other enemies. Among the latter the falcon is the most dangerous. The military pigeon post is best organised in Germany, Italy, and France. In the last French budget a sum of 68,000 fr. was devoted to that branch of the service, and there are at present in France thirty-two sub-depôts, besides the chief pigeon station. In Italy there are twelve sub-depôts, and five in the Italian possessions in Africa.

The following are the regulations as to training and flying in connection with the messenger war-pigeons in Italy. The posts of Digdegha, the wells of Tata, as well as the detachments sent out to reconnoitre towards Ailet, Assur, &c., send their reports by means of the pigeons from the dovecote installed at Massowa, whence they are forwarded to the headquarters at Saati. On rainy days, and when the communications are confidential, the despatches are introduced into goose-quills and sealed; but as this operation, above all when the troops are on the march, entails a certain loss of time, they must only, when possible, write the despatch on a leaf of the pocket-book with which every officer and non-commissioned officer is provided; the despatch is then

tied to a tail-feather of the bird. Conventional signs are also used in the case of a detachment being surprised by the enemy and not having time to send a telegram. For instance, when one or more pigeons arrive at the dovecote without despatches and with the loss of some tail-feathers, it is a sign that the troops have been attacked. Sometimes marks made with colour supply such-and-such information. Each detachment carries three or four pigeons in a light basket of bamboo and net. The distances being short, each despatch is sent by one pigeon. A first despatch is sent at the hour fixed in advance by the commander, the others successively as there is news to transmit. The pigeon-basket is borne by soldiers, who relieve one another at stated intervals. The grains of wheat and vessels of water are confided to a corporal, who has the care of the pigeons. When the detachment has to remain absent more than a day, they take with them four pigeons with wheat and water in a leathern case. If they have to return in a day, they carry but three pigeons, with food and drink necessary. The frequent arrival of these birds from all quarters presents a curious appearance. When they arrive they perch at the window of the dovecote, where their mates and young await them. To enter they must pass through a sort of cage-trap, which does not permit them to return, and at the same time separates them from the other pigeons. The weight of the newcomer sets an electric bell ringing, and this signal continues all the time the bird remains in the trap, thus giving notice to the sergeant of the guard, who takes the despatch and forwards it to headquarters.

The liability of so defenceless a bird as the pigeon to attack has led to experiments being undertaken from time to time with young ravens, which make fairly quick and reliable messengers up to a distance of about fifty miles. As the raven is very teachable (it can be made to 'retrieve' most creditably), and as it manifests a strong attachment to its birthplace, there seems no reason why its training should not be further extended in the new direction, for which its great spirit and endurance appear to eminently fit it.

Here I have only touched upon the speed and power of flight, but the whole subject is one of the most fascinating branches of natural history. No reference has been made to the marvellous movements of birds in the air, which constitute the very poetry of motion—the stationary balancing, hovering, circling, and

gliding, all of which may be observed, especially among our own birds of prey.

Although much is known of the speed of birds and animals, there are but few ascertained facts concerning that of insects and fishes. The comparatively low intelligence of these two classes of animals makes it difficult to direct them. They rarely fly or swim in anything approaching to a straight line, and experiments upon them give only approximate results. Pike in pursuit of their prey seem to dash through the water, and salmon and trout move almost as quickly. The Spanish mackerel, with its smooth, cone-shaped body, is among the swiftest of fishes, and for speed only finds a parallel in the dolphin. There is a great similarity in shape between these two, and both cut the water like a yacht. The first follows the fastest steamers with the greatest ease, in its dashes swimming at five times their speed. The bonito is also a fast swimmer, and all those 'trimmed' in like fashion with him. There is one insect to which attention may be drawn as affording a most striking example of speed among lowly winged creatures. This is the dragon-fly. I have frequently had opportunity of dropping into company with the largest species (*Libellula grandis*) in its aerial excursions in autumn by a particular roadside, along which there was a rushy-margined pool. At such times the writer has been occasionally on foot—more frequently driving or riding. On foot one has scarcely any means of judging of its speed, for in a moment it is past and gone out of sight. But what is the experience when you are driving, say at ten or twelve miles an hour? This rapid voyager passes over, proceeds beyond you almost out of sight, then turns, swerving widely from right to left, repasses again in both directions, traversing repeatedly the ground while you are travelling, or rather dragging, over the same space of about a mile only once. We are apt to exaggerate in these matters, but with every allowance, having compared the flight of a dragon-fly with that of a passing hawk, swallow, or cuckoo, I have computed that this large species is capable of flying at a speed of from eighty to one hundred miles an hour, an enormous draw upon the creature's nerves and muscular powers, as manifested by occasional rests of a few minutes upon a bush or a piece of sedge, its habits not requiring uninterrupted flight at such a pace. Perhaps the need of these occasional rests is an erroneous opinion founded upon too limited an area of observation. For Cuvier has stated that M. Poey, who had particularly studied

the insects of Cuba, informed him that, at a certain season of the year, the northerly winds bring to the city of Havannah and its neighbourhood an innumerable quantity of specimens of one of the species of *Libellula*. Other instances of the periodical flights or migrations of dragon-flies have been stated by observers. And even butterflies have been seen to migrate to distant points of land, making flights of fifty or sixty miles across water. These long journeys may be relieved by occasional rests, as Mr. Newman and others have ascertained that lepidopterous insects are able to alight upon the water, rest awhile, and then rise again with apparent ease—a fact readily credited by fishermen, who so frequently see the green and grey drakes and other *ephemeræ* float downstream, and, if not taken by the trout, suddenly spring up again and resume their aerial dances. But this power of rapid movement in the dragon-fly, be the rate more or less, is in just keeping with its structure. The insect's body is slender, the chest strongly developed, though firm; the wings, four in number, are narrow, of great length, and consist of fine, thin, dry membrane, stretched upon a series of lightly-made *costæ*, or rafters. No wonder, then, that with such a mechanism the creature pursues its prey of smaller insects with such rapidity.

There are many insects which one would little suspect to be furnished with apparatus suited to swift and more or less continuous flight. House flies frequent the inside of our windows, buzzing sluggishly in and out of the room. But what different creatures are they when they accompany your horse on a hot summer's day. A swarm of these little pests keep pertinaciously on wing about the horse's ears; quicken the pace up to ten or twelve miles an hour, still they are there; let a gust of wind arise, and carry them backwards and behind; the breeze having dropped, their speed is redoubled, and they return to their post of annoyance to the poor horse even when urged to its fastest pace. But this example gives only a partial proof of the fly's power of flight, as the following will show. The writer was travelling one day in autumn by rail at about twenty-five miles an hour, when a company of flies put in an appearance at the carriage window. They never settled, but easily kept pace with the train; so much so, indeed, that their flight seemed to be almost mechanical, and a thought struck the writer that they had probably been drawn into a kind of vortex whereby they were carried onward with little exertion on the part of themselves. But this notion was soon disproved. They sallied

forth at right angles from the carriage, flew to a distance of thirty or forty feet, still keeping pace, and then returned with increased speed and buoyancy to the window. To account for this, look at the wings of a fly. Each is composed of an upper and lower membrane, between which the blood-vessels and respiratory organs ramify so as to form a delicate network for the extended wings. These are used with great quickness, and probably 600 strokes are made per second. This would carry the fly about twenty-five feet, but a sevenfold velocity can easily be attained, making 175 feet per second, so that under certain circumstances it can outstrip a racehorse. If a small insect like a fly can outstrip a racehorse, an insect as large as a horse would travel very much faster than a cannon ball.

Bees and wasps are even swifter than flies. Here is another actual incident. The present writer has sprinkled individual wasps and bees with rose-coloured powder, and has found that thus handicapped they could with ease keep up with the fastest trains when speeding down 'Shap Summit,' one of the steepest gradients in the country. Nor were these carried along in the rush of air caused by the train. They would come in and out of the window, sometimes disappearing for a minute or more, but frequently returning again and again. At distances of from five to ten miles they dropped behind, when others took their place. All of us have seen the flagging, lazy butterfly, flitting from flower to flower in our gardens—not quite so lazy, however, if goaded on by some urgent motive. For when this little flutterer, touched by some strange and mysterious feeling which we cannot read, mounts on sportive wings, 'through fields of air prepared to sail,' she hurries onwards and onwards to some new haven of real or fancied delight and happiness. Such were the thoughts which occurred when one of these wanderers accompanied the writer by the roadside for a couple of miles, never flagging a yard behind, nay, sometimes being before a horse that was travelling at the rate of nine or ten miles an hour. What could all this speed and earnestness of the little creature mean? It is not easy to explain how the butterfly, with its broad, soft, feathery wings, should be able to accomplish the feat of speed just recorded.

In the tropics countless swarms of locusts sometimes suddenly make their appearance, and as suddenly vanish. They cover every leaf-bearing thing, and occasionally completely denude whole districts of their greenery. So great are their powers of flight that

they have been seen at sea nearly 400 miles from nearest land. In Natal the farmers, rightly or wrongly, believe that the locusts introduce injurious seeds upon their grass-lands, and the following would seem to show that their belief is well founded. A Mr. Weale, who was of their way of thinking, collected a packet of dried pellets and sent them to England. When closely examined under the microscope they revealed a number of tiny seeds, from which plants of seven kinds of grasses were ultimately raised.

Among animals, those which have been longest under the care of man have attained to the greatest degree of perfection in all those qualities it has been deemed wise to develop. With his mind bent on utility he has striven to improve the staying and flying power of pigeons, the strength and swiftness of horses, and has himself proved to be a marvellous instance of speed and endurance. To observe the differences of locomotion, both as regards structural contrivance and speed, among animals—the term ‘animal’ being extended to every member, high or low, within the province of the animal kingdom—is one of the most fascinating of outdoor studies. It is not an easy matter, however, to compute the speed or mileage of quick-moving animals. Among quadrupeds, the horse perhaps may be considered the fleetest. ‘Hambletonian’ covered a space of four miles in eight minutes, which is but thirty miles an hour if it could be continued. ‘Firetail’ ran a mile in one minute and four seconds; and the famous ‘Eclipse’ is said to have gone at the rate of a mile a minute for a short distance, but it is difficult to form any exact estimate of his speed, as he never met with an opponent to put him to the test. During one of his trials, an old woman, according to Youatt, was asked if she had seen a race. Her reply was that ‘she could not tell whether it was a race or not, but she had seen a horse with a white leg running away at a monstrous rate, and another horse, a great way behind, trying to run after him; but she was sure he would never catch the white-legged horse, even if he ran to the world’s end.’ The above records refer of course to horses galloping; but trotting, which is more or less an artificial mode of horse progression, has, with regard to speed, almost been reduced to an art. For facts concerning it we must look mainly to America, and perhaps no records are more interesting than those of the famous trotting mare ‘Maud S.’ On September 1, 1884, ‘Maud’ ran a mile over the Hartford track in 2 mins. 28 secs., and every fourth day she trotted over the same distance,

the first being the slowest and the fourth the fastest—2 mins. 20 secs. At the end of eight days her training consisted of trotting over two or three mile journeys, with the result that the time was brought down to 2 mins. 13 secs., and three days later to 2 mins. 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ secs. Resting some days, 'Maud' was again tried, and, among other times, succeeded in trotting the mile in a fraction of a second over the above, but went marvellously in the last half-mile. Subsequently to this she was shipped to Lexington, Kentucky, and when she had covered the mile distance in 2 mins. 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ secs., it was decided that in three days she should try and beat her own great record. This she succeeded in doing by trotting a mile in 2 mins. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ secs., and a year later 'Maud' made the world's record—2 mins. 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ secs. This is what no other horse ever accomplished, and the interesting phase of the situation is that the mare is even now in training to beat her own splendid record given above.

As compared to the rate of speed in animals, those attained by man are interesting. A hundred yards has been run in ten seconds; 200 yards in twenty and two-fifths; 300 yards in thirty-one and a half; and a quarter of a mile in forty-eight and four-fifths seconds, by Messrs. A. Wharton, J. Shearman, C. G. Wood, and L. E. Myers respectively. Mr. W. G. George holds the championship for one mile, and up to ten miles, his time for the former distance being 4 mins. 18 $\frac{2}{5}$ secs., and for the latter 51 mins. 20 secs. For fifteen, twenty, and twenty-five miles, Mr. G. A. Dunning holds the record, the first distance being covered in 1 hour 24 mins. 24 secs.; the last in 2 hrs. 33 mins. 40 secs. The same gentleman is champion at forty miles. Mr. J. A. Squires has run thirty miles in 3 hrs. 17 mins. 36 $\frac{1}{2}$ secs.; and Mr. J. E. Dixon is fifty-mile champion with 6 hrs. 18 mins. and 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ secs.—all truly marvellous performances.

IN THE STUDIO.

THERE were two ladies in the studio, and the artist himself. Walter Mallett, R.A., has for some years past been recognised as one of our greatest living painters. The Academy Exhibitions and the engravers have made his name and his work familiar to the public; the artist himself is still very little known. At the time I am referring to, scarcely a year ago, he was seldom seen in drawing-rooms: he loved work and hated society.

On the other hand, there was perhaps no one in all England more certain to be recognised everywhere than the younger of the two ladies I have alluded to. Lady Weybridge had been for some years past one of the leaders of Society, and its fairest ornament—the reigning beauty whose movements were chronicled in the Society journals, and whose photographs (in different variety of costumes) were on sale at every stationer's. Since her husband's death, five years before, gossip, of a not unkindly sort, had been very busy with her name.

Lord Weybridge had been an elderly peer of great wealth, and it was expected that his widow would, after the days of her mourning were over, make a brilliant match. But she had refused all offers, and after five years of widowhood was still a widow—more popular, more fascinating, and more beautiful than ever. The other lady, Mrs. Penygant, was Lady Weybridge's chief friend and constant companion. The two lived together, and had done so since Lady Weybridge had laid aside the most uncompromising tokens of her mourning.

Mrs. Penygant was older than Lady Weybridge, and very plain; her hair was a very light red, and her face was freckled. She wore spectacles, which she took off when she wanted to read.

On this particular morning she kept shifting these contrivances up and down, as she devoted herself in turns to scanning the paragraphs in the *Weekly Globe* and looking at the beautiful lady sitting for her portrait and the diligently-working artist. Neither of these spoke, and Mrs. Penygant felt a little troubled by their silence. She laid down the *Weekly Globe*, adjusted her spectacles, and looked at the canvas.

'The picture is progressing fast,' she said; 'at least, so it seems to me. But, of course, I don't know. What I am so sorry for is

that it can't be exhibited at the Academy, or that we shall have to wait so long before we can see it there. I wish it was March, instead of June.'

The painter smiled a little.

Lady Weybridge glanced at her friend without turning her head.

'You are such a believer in the Academy, Clara,' she said; 'I wonder how many times you've been there this year. You know, Mr. Mallett, Mrs. Penygant's great treat, her great relaxation from the cares of Society, is to go to the Academy. I don't think she ever gets past the room where there hangs a certain portrait which you painted last year.'

'I know I don't,' said the elder lady. 'I like to stop near that picture and listen to what people say. There's always a crowd in front of it, and every newcomer says: "That's the beautiful Lady Weybridge, painted by Walter Mallett, the great artist," and then they all admire with all their might. The men admire the face and the figure, and the ladies the dress. They all admire the painting, though sometimes their comments are too positively funny. They nearly always look out your address, Mr. Mallett, at the end of the catalogue, as if they meant to come and ask you to paint them; and then nearly everybody says: "Mallett—Mallett—of course you remember his 'Andromeda.'" Oh, it is great fun listening to them; I am only sorry you two can't hear what they say about you.'

'Such is fame,' said the artist lightly. 'Lady Weybridge's beautiful costumes procure me the admiration of my country, or at least of my countrywomen.'

'Oh,' broke out Mrs. Penygant enthusiastically, 'you are sure of future fame—generations to come will linger round your canvases and wonder at your skill!'

'But suppose I am using bad pigments?' said the artist.

The lady paid no attention to the interruption; she went on with growing rapture: 'I assure you, I often think of how you two will go down to posterity, hand in hand as it were—"The beautiful lady and the great artist." Your names will be linked together, like Raphael and—and—'

'Pope Julius II,' suggested the artist.

'No, I don't mean the Pope,' said the other. 'I can't think of her name; there's a poem of Browning's about it, I think.'

Lady Weybridge looked a little annoyed.

'I am afraid your imagination is running wild, Clara,' she said.

Then a long silence ensued, the artist working diligently all the time. At last Mrs. Penygant rose, and with a little gasp of astonishment, said: 'Oh, dear Helen, do you mind my leaving you for a little time? I wrote last night to my sister in New York, and I have forgotten to post the letter—I think the mail goes out at mid-day. It won't take me long to go and come in a hansom; and I do want to get the letter off.'

Mrs. Penygant didn't appear to expect a reply, for she went straight out. At the door of the studio she glanced back for half a second on the two she was leaving behind.

'It's an awfully lame excuse,' she said to herself; 'but I am not good at invention. I think I am doing right; and when I come back I expect they'll both be grateful to me.'

The painter took no notice of her going, but worked on in the same steady way, and the lady, a practised sitter, remained perfectly fixed in the graceful pose in which she was being painted.'

Lady Weybridge had never looked lovelier; she was in evening dress, and in the heavy masses of her dark hair diamonds shone. Her neck and arms were bare, and the noble poise of the head gave dignity to the full beauty of their gracious curves. She was radiantly lovely—beyond all prettiness—imperially and perfectly beautiful. The artist, too, was strikingly handsome. He was about forty-five years of age, tall, and with clear-cut features. His plentiful black hair was sprinkled with gray; his eyes were dark, the lines of his mouth suggested a sad and serious firmness. One would have said that he had seldom smiled.

For some time neither spoke; at last the lady, whose thoughts were becoming troublesome, moved a little, and said in her clear fluted voice: 'Do you think the picture will be a success?'

'If it isn't, Lady Weybridge,' the painter replied, 'the fault will be mine; but I don't think there will be any failure. If it goes into the Academy next year, I dare say Mrs. Penygant will be gratified by the usual crowd.'

'But do you think you will please yourself?'

'I never please myself, Lady Weybridge; that is, never quite please myself.'

'You've always been dissatisfied with your portraits of me, I know,' returned the lady after a few moments' reflection. But I think they are only too lovely, and so does everybody else. I don't mind confessing that I read all the criticisms.'

The painter did not reply, and after a little while Lady Weybridge continued:

'You have painted me a good many times, haven't you?'

'Several times. I hope you are not going to be tired of sitting to me.'

'Oh, no, I rather like it; sitting quite still is soothing to the nerves—and I have nerves you know. But perhaps I do come here a little too often. Has that ever struck you?'

'Never,' replied the painter emphatically.

'There is a paragraph in that paper'—Lady Weybridge nodded in the direction of the *Weekly Globe*, which Mrs. Penygant has dropped—'which I suppose is intended to refer to you and me. It suggests——'

'Please don't turn your head, Lady Weybridge,' said Mr. Mallett, working diligently. 'I never read these Society journals, and don't care at all what they say. It is their business to get up false reports for the amusement of the public, and one more or less doesn't matter to anybody. I suppose anybody who chooses to think'—he continued after a little—'can see why I am always glad to paint you.'

'Indeed?'

'It is simply because you are the most beautiful woman in the world.'

'The compliment is a little too undisguised.'

'It is not a compliment, it is a statement of fact, absolutely true to the best of my knowledge. I have only seen one person who could enter the lists against you.'

'And who was she?'

'She sat to me for my "Andromeda."'

Lady Weybridge frowned passing disapprobation.

'A model!' she exclaimed.

'Yes, but a very good girl—a model of propriety, if you will excuse the feeble joke. She is now married to a highly respectable cheesemonger in the Caledonian Road.'

'And she doesn't sit for the figure any more?'

'I regret to say that her husband won't allow her to sit at all; he is a deacon of some chapel, and has Puritanical notions.'

'How dreadful!'

'Yes, the Philistinism of the English *bourgeois* is deplorable.'

'I sympathise with your distress. But, to come back to the original subject, you seem to forget that, though it is quite clear, according to your statement, why you should like to paint me, it is not so clear why I should like to be painted.'

The artist did not reply, and once more silence reigned. Again the lady broke out : ' You are an indefatigable worker, Mr. Mallett. But I want a little rest—I am tired of trying to look graceful. Let me give up attitudes for a time. Take me round your studio, and show me what you have.'

' There is nothing new,' the painter said. ' Don't let me fatigue you ; I can just finish this bit while you walk about the studio—or, sit in a more comfortable chair. Perhaps you would like to look at the paper your friend has left.'

Lady Weybridge took the journal from his hands, but did not read it. She was watching the painter closely. Her cheek was flushed ; she moved uneasily in the chair ; her whole manner indicated restlessness, which contrasted with the calm dignity of her previous pose. At last she said :

' Do you know that you are hardly polite, Mr. Mallett, to leave me to my own resources like this ?'

' Doesn't the *Weekly Globe* interest you ?' said the painter, laying down his palette. ' Shall I get you a cup of tea ?'

' Tea !' said the lady, with ironic emphasis. ' No, thank you ; women don't try to escape *ennui* by drinking something. But you may sit down over there and talk.'

She glanced at him, and then let her eyelids drop. The painter stopped a slight yawn.

' I don't know what to talk about,' he said.

' I was just thinking,' said the lady, ' how long it is since I met you first. It was at Dr. Murby's, I think.'

He started slightly, and then said slowly, examining a spot of paint on his velvet coat : ' I believe it was ; it was nearly ten years ago.'

' Ten years,' said she, with a sigh—' how time flies ! We are quite old friends, are we not ? That was before Edith Murby was married, wasn't it ?'

' Yes,' he said ; ' she became the Honourable Mrs. Montcalm about a year after I met you first.'

' You have an excellent memory, Mr. Mallett.'

' Have I ?' he said, absently.

And again the conversation flagged.

' Are you ready to sit again ?' said the painter.

' No,' replied Lady Weybridge, impatiently tapping the ground with her foot—' no, I am not ready yet ; I want to ask you something first. Why is it—— ?'

She hesitated—her cheek flushed a deeper red, a forced smile strayed upon her lips.

‘Why is it that you are so—so unfriendly?’

‘Unfriendly?’ said the painter. ‘I don’t understand you, Lady Weybridge.’

His tone was indifferent, he seemed to be fixing his attention on the paint-spot.

‘Why do you avoid me then?’ she continued. ‘Why don’t you come to see me? Why do you refuse my invitations?’

‘I rarely go into society,’ he said, ‘and I dined with you not long since.’

‘More than a month ago,’ she replied quickly. ‘Are you aware that there are men who would do anything to get one of those invitations that you reject so easily?’

‘I have the privilege of seeing you here, Lady Weybridge,’ he replied coldly.

She flashed an indignant look at him, and broke out vehemently:

‘Yes, here, where you have a brush in your hand, you are glad to see me; you like painting me, I know. You admire the turn of my neck I suppose, or, perhaps, the way my hair is done pleases you. I am in your eyes just a model, a substitute for the cheesemonger’s wife. As to my thoughts, my ideas, my feelings, you don’t care a straw about them. I am just a frivolous woman of the world to you—just that, and nothing more. All I am good for is to have my portrait painted.’ She spoke rapidly, with mounting tones.

The artist had turned away, and did not look at her as he replied slowly:

‘Lady Weybridge, you are a great lady, and very beautiful; wherever you go, you get admiration, flattery, and what passes for love with the men and women of the world. And those who throng about you are noble, rich, young, and they are all your devoted admirers, your obedient vassals and slaves. The cream and flower of English Society is at your feet. What more would you have? As for me, I am a plebeian. What have I to do with marquises and viscounts? And I don’t choose to make one more in the menagerie of your captive animals.’

When Lady Weybridge spoke again it was in low, tremulous tones:

‘Come then,’ she said, ‘and see me, and you will not be

troubled by any of those silly people. Everything shall be as you like, if you will come. You think I am a woman of the world—cold, frivolous, and heartless. Ah, how little you know me! It is horrible to be misjudged like that,' she went on with sudden vehemence—'misunderstood; it is cruel, horrible, abominable. To be misunderstood by one that I——'

Her beautiful bosom heaved convulsively—a sob checked her voice. It was but for a moment; she soon regained self-control, smiled faintly, and held out her hand.

The painter did not take it; he had turned round, and stood facing her, looking at her fixedly, almost fiercely.

'Lady Weybridge,' he said, 'let me remind you of what you seem to have forgotten. You spoke of Dr. Murby just now; do you remember his daughter, his only child, Edith, who is now the Honourable Mrs. Montcalm? Do you remember the house in Brook Street where you saw her first? I was a constant visitor, and I think not unwelcome. I was then, you know, in the Fitzroy Square stage of my artistic career. I was ambitious, and hoped; but I had only hope. The share of fame I have now hadn't even begun to descend upon me. But I think Dr. Murby believed in me, and his daughter believed in me too; and I came to their house again and again.

'I saw Edith constantly; we talked together, read the same books, and shared our ideas. I adored her, worshipped her, loved her as only they can love who love for the first time, when youth is past; and she—she—liked me, was glad to see me, was learning to love me I think. I remember once—— Ah, she would have loved me, I am sure, if you had not come between us.

'You had not been married long then; you had come from your Devonshire parsonage—I think it was in Devonshire—to dazzle Society with your brilliant beauty. The Murbys were some connections of yours, and they were pleased to be noticed by you, in the midst of your fresh grandeur. You took Edith up. The first time I saw you in the drawing-room at Brook Street I felt that you would come between me and her. And you did.

'Edith was simple, unaffected, and unworldly; but what woman is there in whose heart there does not lurk some secret craving for the glitter and glare of social vanities? You filled her mind with your ideas, taught her to expect a brilliant marriage, such as you yourself had made. She was pretty, not perfectly beautiful like you, but still undeniably pretty—some men like the snowdrop kind of beauty—and she would be rich: why

shouldn't she climb to some pinnacle of social position? And you taught her to distrust me, almost to despise me. Oh, I know very well the innuendoes you dropped, what undisguised sneers you let fall—know them as well as if I had heard them spoken:

“There are lots of clever artists, my dear, or of artists who think themselves clever; and a man who at thirty-five has not even begun to succeed!”

‘And so I found my welcome growing colder, her smile as she saw me less cordial. It was soon all over: I had nothing to offer but my deep love, and you had taught her to laugh at love.

‘The time came when I felt that we were for ever separated. I did not make any protestations, or complaints—there was no scene—only one evening, as I left the house, I told myself that I must never return. I looked up at the rooms where I had spent so many happy moments, and felt that that was all over—that I should never enter those doors again. Everything in that drawing-room—the tables, the chairs, the place where the piano stood, the pictures on the walls—every little detail is fixed in my memory for ever. But I have never been there since, never seen her since, or sought to see her.

‘It was your doing, I suppose, that not long after she married the Honourable Augustus Montcalm, who will be a peer when his brother has finished drinking himself to death. And I suppose you were sorry when, about three years after the wedding, the two you had brought together separated finally.

‘I saw the affair in the papers—not the Society papers, you understand. The Honourable Augustus hadn't beaten his wife, or sworn at her in public, and so she couldn't be set free from him altogether. But he went off to shoot deer in America. I was told that that girl who used to sing the Cockney comic songs went with him. That is what you did for her.

‘And for me, Lady Weybridge, for me—you blighted my whole life. When I lost Edith Murby I lost all happiness, all hope of it; I had loved once, and should never love again. I have gained fame, and I can sell my pictures for extravagant sums, and everybody thinks me a successful man. But I shall always be alone. I see the path of my life stretching out before me, lonely and solitary. I shall travel along it unaccompanied to the end. And all this is your doing, Lady Weybridge. There was a time when I hated you with all my heart and soul—when, if I could have blighted your beauty and made your life as desolate as mine is, I would have done it.

'That time is past. I hate you no longer. I know you can say that you acted for the best—that you did what anybody else would have done under the circumstances; and I do not complain of my lot in life. The man who can work can do without happiness. Yet, when you offer me your—your esteem, your friendship——'

He made a long pause. The impassioned speech he had made had been interrupted by several intervals of silence, during which he had paced about the studio, and then had broken forth more fervently than before. Now he stood still and gazed at the beautiful woman before him. Her mournful, fixed look stirred other feelings, and, with a sudden revulsion of sentiment, he cried out :

'Ah, let us be friends, notwithstanding—friends always.'

He took her hand and raised it to his lips.

'I will come whenever you ask me, Lady Weybridge. Pardon my wild words.'

She let him hold her hand for a few moments, while he looked on her with broken, troubled glances. Then, with one swift look at him, she said composedly :

'I am ready to resume the sitting now, Mr. Mallett.'

Mrs. Penygant's voice was heard in altercation with a cabman. She came in briskly, put on her spectacles, and proceeded to examine the picture.

'I can see what you have done,' she said ; 'you've been very busy while I've been away.'

And she glanced from the one to the other. Soon she broke out into a flood of small talk, while all the time the undercurrent of her thoughts was running like this :

'I wonder how things have turned out. She is in love with him, because he is the only man she knows who is not her devoted slave. Will he care for her?—can he help it? I hope she won't be angry with me for going away; I meant it for the best.'

Lady Weybridge's clear fluted voice interrupted her reflections and the remarks she was making to the painter.

'I think,' she said, 'I can hear the carriage outside. Are you ready to go, Clara? I am a little fatigued. And, do you know, Mr. Mallett tells me he won't be able to give me any more sittings for at least a fortnight. I suppose he's off on one of his wild expeditions—going to walk over the Alps, or something of that sort.'

Mrs. Penygant looked at her friend: she was throwing a cloak over her shoulders; the painter was making a show of assistance,

He followed them to the carriage, and handed to Mrs. Penygant the *Weekly Globe*; then he went back and gave a few touches to the picture.

'Shall I ever finish it?' he thought. 'What does she mean?'

He became meditative.

'She is right,' he said; 'a week in the Alps to think things over will do me good.'

It was exactly a fortnight when Mr. Mallett got back to his studio. He turned to the half-finished portrait of Lady Weybridge, and stood gazing at it for some time, lost in thought.

'How supremely beautiful she is!' he murmured. 'And I—I was a brute. Why should I rake up the dead past? Will she ever give me another sitting, I wonder? And if she does——'

His servant brought in the letters which had come during his absence. There were not very many; on the envelope of one he recognised the handwriting of Lady Weybridge. He tore it open hastily.

'Dear Mr. Mallett,' it said, 'I am writing to tell you a secret, and to give you an invitation. The secret first. I am going to be married to the Marquis of Evesham. The engagement is to be kept strictly private for some time, and I tell you of it as a pledge of the friendship which is, I hope, always to subsist between us. I mustn't praise my future husband, but I may say that I think you will like him, when you come to know him; and you will not find him such a Philistine as the cheesemonger. Now for the invitation. Will you come and dine with me on the 10th of July? You won't find any of the animals of my menagerie—only one marquis, and no viscount. But Mrs. Montcalm will be there, and she will be very glad to see you after so many years.'

He read the letter through twice, and then became aware of a postscript:

'As you never read the Society papers, you may not be aware that the Hon. Augustus Montcalm has been dead for more than two years. He got into a quarrel in Texas or Arizona, or some of those places, and was shot.'

A long time passed, and Mr. Mallett was still meditating upon that letter; the others he had not even looked at. Then he roused himself, and wrote a hasty acceptance.

'Oh,' he said to himself, 'some women can forgive. But the 10th of July is eight days off: Lady Weybridge tempers her mercy with justice. Eight days to wait!'

DEEP-SEA FISH.

A MENDACIOUS and all too popular poet has remarked in his rhymes upon the singular physiological effects supposed to be produced on the piscine anatomy 'When the sun's perpendicular rays illumine the depths of the sea.' In this preliminary physical statement the bard in question was very much out of it. The sun's perpendicular rays, we all know, do *not* illumine the depths of the sea at all, or anything like it. On the contrary, they only penetrate, at the very outside, some two hundred fathoms down into the world of waters, beyond which distance all is outer darkness. The light that falls upon the surface has been entirely absorbed or used up in reflection long before it reaches any deeper level.

The depths of the sea extend much further than two hundred fathoms. In some places the plummet marks five miles perpendicularly before it reaches the bottom, and the average soundings in the open Atlantic give a depth of from 2,000 to 3,000 fathoms, or in other words (roughly speaking) from two to three miles. (The landsman is not usually strong on fathoms, I feel sure, so I let him off easy with his more familiar standard of horizontal measurement.) Hence it will immediately be obvious to the meanest arithmetical intelligence that when you have got about one-tenth of the way down to the abysses of the sea, or a good deal less, light fails you, and you find yourself thenceforth involved in thick watery darkness.

The greater part of the ocean bed is thus pitch dark. But life and light do not cease together. Living creatures, whose ancestors were developed in the upper strata of the sea or on the shore shallows, have migrated slowly downward, generation after generation, as population above pressed them hard, and have adapted themselves meanwhile to their altered conditions. How far down in the sea life can be supported we don't yet know with certainty: but it is settled that some species find it worth living, in spite of Schopenhauer and Mr. Mallock, at a depth of over three miles from the surface. If it were only the darkness they had to endure, that would be bad enough; but what must prove far more trying to a sensitive nature is the extraordinary pressure of the superincumbent mass of water. Those persons who have gone down into the great deep in a

diving-bell must surely have noticed how very unpleasant this sense of compression becomes, often to the extent of making blood spurt in little outbursts from the mouth and nostrils. To meet such extra pressure the deep-sea fish have had to be specially organised; and one indirect result of this special organisation led to the first suspicion of the existence of life at these abysmal depths, long before the days of 'Challenger' expeditions and profound bottom-dredging.

For in the mid-Atlantic sundry unknown and odd-looking creatures were from time to time picked up floating about dead, which, though frequently differing from one another in other respects, agreed as a rule in two curious and at first sight seemingly incomprehensible particulars. For one thing, even when quite fresh and recently killed, they seemed so loosely knit together that they tumbled to pieces like mummies at the slightest touch; their flesh had no firmness or consistency of any sort, and it was found exceedingly difficult to preserve them whole for future examination. In the second place, they had almost always come by their death through their own greediness, in the partially successful attempt to swallow and digest a brother fish at least as big as themselves, and sometimes even a good deal bigger. This last feat may seem, to be sure, on first hearing, somewhat too closely modelled on the incidents related in the life of the late Baron Munchausen; but it is nevertheless true and strictly comprehensible. For the mouths of these deep-sea fish are very wide and gaping, and their stomachs consist of an extensible elastic bag, almost like a bladder or an india-rubber membrane, which will spread out, if necessary, to an indefinite extent, so as to enclose an object quite as large as its own possessor. The floating fish picked up in the Atlantic were thus observed very frequently to contain within this more than Falstaffian protuberance the body of another fish at least as big as themselves, hanging down below them in their very much stretched and extended receptacle.

From such data the ingenious ichthyologist of the day at once deduced the not very obvious conclusion that these hapless victims of their own misguided appetite must really be inhabitants of the very profoundest abysses. For he argued thus. If a fish who habitually lived at an enormous depth in the sea were by force of circumstances over which he had no control to be brought alive to the surface, his sudden removal from the immense pressure under which he was accustomed to live would naturally cause all

the gases in his body to expand rapidly, just as the air in the diving-bell expands as it reaches the top of the water. If the depth at which he habitually resided was something exceptionally profound, then the expansion would be sufficient to break the tissues in pieces, each little cell or vessel giving way separately under the strain, till the entire fish fell almost bodily into a thousand fragments. In short, he would blow up piecemeal by the simultaneous bursting of innumerable little internal gas-reservoirs.

And what would be the circumstances over which his control was so precarious that they hurried him at last to this most unpleasant doom? Well, suppose for a moment, as Dr. Günther clearly puts it, a fish organised to live at a depth of from five to eight hundred fathoms comes across another, as big as himself, organised to live at a depth of from three to five hundred fathoms, about the debateable borderland zone where their respective realms march together. And suppose that fish number one seizes in his jaws fish number two, and endeavours to swallow him alive, or, as we might more correctly say, to cover or enclose him in his patent extensible stomach. What more natural, under such circumstances, than that the swallowed fish, in its wild struggles to escape, should carry its swallower out of its depth—only the other way on—into a higher layer of water to which its organs and tissues are very ill adapted? There, the diminished pressure of a less column of water would make the gases inside it expand so rapidly that the deep-sea fish would soon begin to act positively like a balloon, and both eater and eaten would rise at once, ever faster and faster, by the upward pressure of the surrounding liquid on their own lighter tissues, towards the unaccustomed surface, which they would reach either dead or in a dying condition. That is the simple explanation of the odd fish which are found now and again floating soft and flabby on the water's top, with another big fish, as large as themselves, coiled up undigested in their protruded stomachs.

People who go up in a balloon or who climb high mountains often experience sensations faintly resembling those of the deep-sea fish as it rises on its last fatal journey towards the surface. Only, instead of the pressure removed being the comparatively light one of a column of air, it is the dense weight of a column of water a mile or two high that is removed in the fish, so that the resulting expansion is something vastly more voluminous. The pressure amounts, in fact, to a ton per square inch for every thou-

sand fathoms. For a similar reason, the fish seem loosely knit when they come to the surface, and have soft and light cartilaginous skeletons; but under the enormous pressure in which their lives are passed, often amounting to nearly three tons to the inch, these flabby muscles must become firm and vigorous, and these fibrous bones as solidly bound together as a tiger's or an elephant's.

But another difficulty seems to stand in the way of the very existence of organic beings at these profound depths. Without light, life is impossible. For all life depends, in the last resort, as physiology teaches us, on the action of light upon vegetable tissues. And plants at least can't live in the dark, for light is as essential to their organic rhythm as food and air are to animals. Therefore, it would seem, animals can't live there either; for all animals feed directly or indirectly off plants, which they either eat in person, or at least in the form of other animals which have already eaten them. Hence we seem to arrive at a biological dead-lock. How can life exist at all at depths where light can never penetrate?

The answer is, though vegetable life ceases abruptly with the sunlight, animal life manages to continue by preying upon other animals who belong by nature to the upper strata. We know now that arctic and polar creatures depend ultimately for all their food upon the swarms of little pelagic or open-sea animals which are carried northward by warm currents towards the frozen regions. Just in like manner the deep-sea fish live upon the organisms which fall to them continually, in a sort of organic pea-soup, from the topmost strata. The surface of the sea is alive with vast swarms of minute organisms, both plants and animals, and the 'Challenger' investigations have shown conclusively that showers of these keep dropping day and night 'like a constant rain' towards the ooze of the bottom. A whole deep-sea fauna of fish, and crustaceans, and nameless creeping things feed upon these animalcules so generously showered down upon them like the manna from heaven; and other predaceous fish, again, of more formidable organisation, feed upon the fish that feed upon the animalcules. Fish of the first class are mostly toothless; they pick up what they can get by straining the water through their lips: those of the second class have fierce fangs like a wolf's or a shark's, and look veritable sea-wolves with their yawning jaws and prickly backbones and predaceous aspect.

The queerest thing about deep-sea creatures is their arrangements for vision. Fish that live at very great depths have either

no eyes at all, or enormously big ones. Indeed, there are two ways you may get on in these gloomy abysses—by delicate touch-organs, or by sight that collects the few rays of light due to phosphorescence or other accidental sources. Now, as we go down in the water, we find at each depth that the effects produced upon the eyes of fish are steadily progressive in one direction or the other. Species that live at a depth of eighty fathoms have the eye already a good deal bigger than their nearest representatives that live at or near the surface. Down to the depth of two hundred fathoms, where daylight disappears, the eyes get constantly bigger and bigger. Beyond that depth small-eyed forms set in, with long feelers developed to supplement the eyes. Sight, in fact, is here beginning to atrophy. In the greatest abysses the fish are mostly blind, feeling their way about entirely by their sensitive bodies alone over the naked surface of rock at the bottom. Some of them have still external relics of functionless eyes; in others, the oldest and most confirmed abysmal species, the eye has altogether disappeared externally, though its last representative may still be recognised, embedded deep in the tissues of the head.

But many deep-sea fish have a curious system of hollows in the skull or along a line on the body, which secrete mucus or slime; and this slime often envelopes them completely, as in a sheet of jelly, from head to tail. Strange to say, it is phosphorescent. Moreover, many other deep-sea species have two sets of organs buried in their skin, consisting of round, shining, opalescent bodies, very closely resembling mother-of-pearl. One sort are large and oval, and are placed on the head, not far from the eye: the other kind are smaller, and arranged in a series along the body and tail, a pair usually answering to each joint of the backbone. All of them are abundantly supplied with nerves, and they seem to be organs for the production and perhaps also for the perception of phosphorescent light. If so, we may suppose that each such fish goes about like a string of glowworms, or a train of lighted cars, all the organs along his side or tail shining faintly in the dark, somewhat after the fashion of luminous paint. Dr. Günther suggests that in certain cases the phosphorescence may be produced in a sort of backchamber of the organ, and then emitted in particular directions through the lens in front, precisely as a policeman flashes his bull's-eye on any suspected point in the back premises of his beat. On the subject of these curious mechanisms, however, science has not yet said her last word.

All that we can do at present is to recognise their existence among many deep-sea fish, and to conclude that they must have some special service to perform for the organism in the way of making up for otherwise defective senses.

No doubt at all, however, exists as to the fact that many deep-sea animals do emit light, though the precise nature of the mechanism for its emission is not always certain.

Whatever little light may be produced in the ocean depths by such phosphorescent lamps or other queer physiological devices can only serve to show the shapes and sizes of bodies, but not to display ornamental colours. For all deep-sea fish are very plain in their colouring, being either black or sedately silvery, which would not happen if their mates could see blue or green or pink or yellow, hues so often produced in shore-haunting or pelagic fishes by the selective influence of sexual preferences. Luminousness in their case, as with the glowworm and the fire-fly, must largely take the place of beauty of colour or ornamental adjuncts as a means of allurement for their slimy mates. Indeed, in the vast majority of luminous animals with which we are acquainted, the phosphorescent light is useful only in guiding one sex in its search for the other; and this is probably the case with deep-sea fish as well as with terrestrial creatures. So far as food is concerned, the lamps can only serve, if anything, as a warning to the prey to get out of the way; but so preponderating a number of deep-sea animals are either blind or belong to lower types which never possessed any eyes at all, that this disadvantage can hardly tell much against the few luminous and eye-bearing kinds among so sightless a company. In fact, they would seem to illustrate the old French proverb, *Parmi les aveugles le borgne est roi*.

In East-end lodging-houses, they say, you will always find representatives of every class of society—university men, captains of dragoons, disrobed parsons, younger sons of baronets, chimney-sweeps, newspaper editors, tinkers, tailors, soldiers, sailors, butchers, bakers, candlestick-makers, Queen's counsel, betting men, and jolly undertakers. It is just the same with the deep-sea fauna. Members of every family of fish, high or low, sink in the world now and again, and after various struggles subside at last to the very dregs of the oceanic population. They take to the abysses as an alternative to annihilation; they find themselves in the most literal sense between the devil and the deep sea. And of the two evils they choose the least—the latter. For to take to the deep sea, mind you, is really and truly going down in

the world. It is accepting a lower and more undesirable place in the hierarchy of nature. If for no other reason, the abysses are uncomfortable, viewed as a place of permanent residence, by reason of their unpleasantly low temperature. The conditions are Arctic. Even in the tropics, the water at five hundred fathoms sinks as low as 40° Fahrenheit, and from 1,000 fathoms downward it is uniformly a degree or two only above freezing point. This temperature remains quite unaffected by warmth or cold on the surface, being the same at the equator as in the Arctic circle. Hence the fish that go down in the world and take to the depths may be compared to such unhappy races as the Fuegians or the Esquimaux, pushed by more hardy competitors for the good things of this world to the very verge of the perpetual freezing line. Nevertheless, all families of fish have in their time suffered through some of their members this last indignity. There are few tribes nobler or more dominant in all waters, for example, than the brave and intelligent salmonoids: yet even the salmon kind have sometimes gone to the bad, one of their number (*Bathylagus*), having been dredged up, a degraded sea-trout, from the bed of the Atlantic at a depth of over 2,000 fathoms. The eels, again, though somewhat less distinguished in their human associations, are a group of exceedingly powerful and aggressive fishes, who seldom have to descend to taking a second place in the economy of nature; but there are certain big deep-sea congers who live at a depth of more than two miles, and one remarkable species, with an enormous head and wide gaping mouth, is only known through three floating specimens, found on the surface of the North Atlantic, their stomachs distended by having swallowed some other fish which weighed three or four times as much as its would-be devourer. Let this be a lesson to us always to chop our meat very fine, and never to wish to rise above that station in life to which it has pleased the existing distribution of functions in this country to call us.

On the whole, however, though fish of all families have contributed their quatum to the formation of this peculiar deep-sea fauna, it is the nocturnal forms that have specially sunk in the world, through their own shortcomings, to the nether abysses. Night-prowling kinds are always rather skulking loafers, left behind in the race for life, and therefore ready, like the burglar or the jackal, to pick up a dishonest livelihood in the dark, anywhere or anyhow. Moreover, all these nocturnal fish have either big eyes or very bad ones, and in both cases they are quite accustomed to

prowling about in search of food with very little light indeed, or none to speak of. Hence it's easier for them to accommodate themselves to their new surroundings in the depths than for other kinds of fish; and the consequence is that pelagic nocturnal families are the ones most fully represented in the deep-sea fauna. The family of the scopelids, for example, which includes our good old friend the Bombay duck, is an extremely abysmal one; several of its genera and species have taken entirely to life in very low places, ranging from a thousand fathoms downwards to nearly three miles, and with all kinds of variations in eyes, teeth, jaws, and general appearance. But even the surface kinds rise to the top by night only, to go on the prowl for prey, descending to the depths by day or in rough weather, for security against sunlight or agitation of the water. This is the case with our genial friend the Bombay duck himself, who is phosphorescent when fresh, and when dried is toasted in the oven and eaten with curry.

As to the shapes and appendages of deep-sea fish, they are endless in their curiosity and aimless in their diversity. It is a well-known habit of fish to be odd; and some of the oddest of the number inhabit the deep seas. In one case they are wedge-shaped, in another long and lank, in a third they resemble nothing on earth so much as the hobgoblins at the Drury Lane pantomime. There are the curious ribbon-fish, with their fins prolonged into feelers many times as long as the body; and there are other strange types with pointed tails and eyeless heads that look more like nightmares than actual productions of matter-of-fact nature. And when the original oddity of the forms has been further increased by the voracious swallowing propensities of deep-sea life, the resulting shape is sometimes supremely ludicrous, as in the case of that little four-inch-long sea-wolf, figured by Günther, who has filled his capacious pouch with a brother fish measuring as nearly as possible just double his own size.

Most of these specialised deep-sea types must have inhabited the abysses for an enormous length of time, in order to have become so thoroughly adapted to the strange world they live in—a world of darkness, cold, and preternatural stillness, a world where no sound ever breaks the death-like silence, and no breeze ever disturbs the eternal calm. The gradual obsolescence of eyes as one proceeds from the surface downwards suggests the idea that the fish have gone on fitting themselves from time to time to lower and ever lower depths of abysmal existence. For in these dark and chilly zones no differences can be marked of north or

south, of district or region ; each species ranges by depth alone, and the varying depths belong to varying types, exactly as one observes with the belts of vegetation as one rises on a mountain. Of course a fish that is adapted to a pressure of a thousand fathoms can't easily support a depth of fifteen hundred ; and a blind species selected for the pressure of the three-mile line would 'blow itself up with spontaneous combustion,' like the fly in the song, if it ventured to rise to the unwonted height of a mile below the surface.

Yet in their own way these strange abysmal types show a marvellous adaptation, after all, to the wants of their environment. Some of them grope out their way by wonderfully sensitive feelers, which wave around them on every side in the deep still water. Some of them light up their own path, like carriages on a country highway, by opalescent flashes from their own electric dynamos. Some of them feel their way with hands over the bottom, or peer with great eyes like cats and owls through the dim twilight of the abysses. Some of them clothe themselves from head to tail in flashing sheets of phosphorescence, and move through the waters, illuminated from within by their own inner light, like esoteric Buddhists. One terrible Atlantic form—cruel, with fierce fangs set in his horrible jaws—carries a double pair of signal lanterns just in front of each great staring eye, and wears a long movable barbel underneath his chin, which acts as a feeler for him while on the prowl after prey. In every case the self-same moral is fixed upon our attention : even in the lowest and most undesirable walks (or swims) of life, immense adaptation is still necessary to success ; you can't get on, be it only as a crossing-sweeper, without ingenuity, cunning, strength, adaptability, unscrupulousness, force, and an unblemished moral character.

The worst openings in the world are as crowded as the best. Wherever a chance exists of earning a livelihood somehow, there some man or fish is ever at hand ready to embrace it. Or rather, for every opening there are a dozen men and a dozen fish, all waiting to compete, tooth and nail, against one another, with internecine warfare. It is struggle for life everywhere and with everybody alike ; and when the four-mile line is crowded to excess, enterprising pioneers of blind and phosphorescent piscinity will fight with one another, we may be sure, in a deadly scramble, like the Oklahoma rush, to get a first footing in the cold and cheerless five-mile stratum.

A BRIDE FROM THE BUSH.

CHAPTER XVII.

WAITING FOR THE WORST.

FOR the second time, it was Granville whom Alfred first encountered on his return from town. They met in the twilight. Dinner was over, and Granville sauntered alone in the bit of garden between the house and the road, smoking a cigarette. Suddenly the gate was opened, and the one brother, looking up, saw the other coming quickly towards him through the dusk.

It was too dark for the ready reading of faces; but it struck Granville that the approaching footsteps were hasty and unusual. He recalled Alfred's unaccountable manner of the night before. Indeed, all his movements, during the past two days, were mysterious: up to London first thing in the morning, back late, and not a word to anyone; whereas the whole household, as a general rule, were in possession of most of Alfred's private plans and hopes and fears. But Granville had no time to speculate now. Alfred came straight up to him.

'I want to speak to you, Gran,' he said. 'I'm glad I found you here.'

The step had been suspicious; the voice was worse. It was calm enough, but it was not Alfred's voice at all. Something had happened. Granville put up his eye-glass; but in that light it did not avail him much.

'Let us sit down, then,' said Granville, leading the way to a seat under the trees. 'What is it about?'

Then Alfred began, in set tones and orderly phrases. The affectation of his manner was almost grotesque.

'I want a kind of professional opinion from you, Gran, about—let us say, about a case that interests me rather. That will be near enough to the mark, I think.'

'Delighted to help you, if I can.' Granville lounged back carelessly on the garden-seat, but his keen glance lost not a line of the other's profile, as Alfred bent forward with his eyes upon the ground; and those lines seemed strangely hardened.

'Thank you! The case is, briefly, this,' Alfred continued: 'somebody—no matter who—has been missing for some days. The number of days is of no consequence either. The police were not informed immediately. They only heard of it last night. But, this afternoon, they found——'

Alfred checked himself, sat upright, shifted his position, and met Granville's gaze.

'What should you consider incontestable evidence of drowning, Gran?'

'The body.'

'Of course. But you have to look for bodies. What should you find, to make you search with the absolute certainty of discovering the body at last?'

'Nothing else could make it an absolute certainty. But lots of things would set you searching—a hat, for instance.'

'They have found her hat!' said Alfred, through his clenched teeth.

'Her hat! Whose?'

Alfred stretched over, caught Granville's arm in a nervous grip, and whispered rapidly in his ear. In a moment Granville knew all. But he did not speak immediately. When he did speak, it was to ask questions. And there was another unnatural voice now, besides Alfred's—Granville's was quite soft.

'Was she unhappy at all?' he asked.

'Just the reverse, I thought, until last week. You know what happened in the Park yesterday week. She said some very wild things after that, and spoke as though she had never been quite happy here; she vowed she would never forgive herself for what she had done; and she said she wished she was dead. Well, I did not think much about her words; I thought more of what she had done; I put down what she said to the shame and temper of the moment, not to real unhappiness. But, when I said good-bye to her, then she *was* unhappy—more so than I ever knew her before.'

From his tone, no one could have guessed that he was speaking of his wife.

'And you think she—she——'

Granville could not bring his lips to utter the words.

Alfred could. 'I think she has drowned herself,' he said calmly.

Granville shuddered. Callous as he was himself by nature,

callousness such as this he could not have imagined possible; it was horrible to see and to hear.

Neither spoke for some little time.

'Did it never occur to you,' said Granville, at last, 'that she might have drowned herself without all this trouble, simply by walking to the bottom of the garden here?'

'What?' cried Alfred, sharply. His fingers tightened upon Granville's arm. His voice fell, oddly enough, into a natural tone. Granville repeated his question.

'No,' said Alfred, hoarsely, 'that never crossed my mind. But there's something in it. God bless you, Gran, for putting it into my head! It's almost like a ray of hope—the first. If I hadn't seen the things and identified them as hers——'

'The things! You did not say there was anything else besides the hat. What else was there?'

'The jacket she went away in.'

'You are sure it was hers?'

'Yes.'

'You could swear to both hat and jacket?'

'Yes.'

Granville leapt to his feet.

'Who throw off their things when they jump into the water'—he asked, in strange excitement, for him—'the people who mean to sink or the people who mean to swim?'

Alfred stared at him blankly. Gradually the light dawned upon him that had entered Granville's quicker intelligence in a flash.

'What do you mean?' whispered Alfred; and, in a moment, his voice and his limbs were trembling.

'Nothing very obscure,' replied Granville, with a touch of contempt, which, even then, he could not manage to conceal (Alfred's slow perception always had irritated him); 'simply this: Gladys has *not* drowned herself. She was never the girl to do it. She had too much sense and vitality and courage. But she may mean us to think there's an end of her—God knows with what intention. She may have gone off somewhere—God knows where. We must find out——'

He stopped abruptly, and nearly swore: for Alfred was wringing his hand, and weeping like a child.

Granville hated this, but bore it, he considered, like a man. It was now plain to him that Alfred had been driven very nearly

out of his senses : and no wonder—Granville himself could as yet scarcely realise or believe what he had heard. And this outburst was the natural reaction following upon an unnatural mental condition. But *was* there any ground for hope ? Granville was less confident than he appeared when he amended his last words and said :

‘*I will find out !*’

Alfred wrung his hand again. He was calmer now, but terribly shaken and shattered. The weakness that he had been storing up during the past two days had come over him, as it were, in the lump. Granville led him to his room. Alfred had never in his life before known Granville half so good-natured and sympathetic ; he blessed him fervently.

‘You were her friend,’ he said, huskily. ‘She thought no end of you, Gran ! You got on so splendidly together, after the first few days ; and she was always talking about you. Find her—find her for me, Gran ; and God bless you—and forgive her for the trick she has played us !’

Granville did not often feel contrition, or remorse, or shame : but he felt all three just then. He knew rather too well the measure of his own kindness to Gladys. For the first time in his life—and not, perhaps, before it was time—he disliked himself heartily. He felt vaguely that, whatever had happened, he had had something to do with it. He had had more to do with it than he guessed. ‘I’ll do my best—I’ll do my best,’ he promised ; and he meant his ‘best’ to be better than that of the smartest detective at Scotland Yard.

He left Alfred, shut himself up alone, and reviewed the situation. An hour’s hard thinking led to a rather ingenious interview—one with the girl Bunn. It took place on the stairs, of all places. Granville saw her set foot upon the bottom stair ; he immediately sat down upon the top one, produced a newspaper, and blocked the gangway.

‘Bunn, you have a sweetheart in Australia. Don’t pout and toss your head ; it’s nothing to be ashamed of—quite the contrary ; and it’s the fact, I think—eh ?’

‘Lor’, Mr. Granville, what if I have ?’

‘Well, nothing ; only there is something about it in this newspaper—about Australia, I mean ; not about you—that’s to come. You shall have the newspaper, Bunn ; here it is. I thought you’d like it, that’s all.’

Bunn took the paper, all smiles and blushes.

'Oh, thank you, Mr. Granville. And—and I beg your pardon, sir.'

'Don't name it, my good girl. But, look here, Bunn; stay one moment, if you don't mind.' (She could scarcely help staying, he gave her no chance of passing; besides, he had put her under an obligation). 'Tell me now, Bunn—didn't Mrs. Alfred know something about him? And didn't Mrs. Alfred talk to you a good deal about Australia?'

'That she did, sir. But she didn't know my young man, Mr. Granville. She only got his address from me just as she was going away, sir.'

'Ah! she wanted his address before she went away, did she?'

'Yes, sir. She said she would name him in writing to her father, or in speaking to Mr. Barrington, or that, any way, it'd be nice to have it, against ever she went out there again, sir.'

'Oh, she gave three reasons all in one, eh? And did she say she'd like to go out again, Bunn?'

'She always said that, sir, between ourselves—"between you and I, Bella," it used to be. But, time I gave her the address, she went on as if she would like to go, and meant a-going, the very next day.'

'Yet she didn't like leaving this, even for a week—eh, Bunn?'

'Lor', no, sir! She spoke as if she was never coming back no more. And she kissed me, Mr. Granville—she did, indeed, sir; though I never named that in the servants' hall. She said there might be a accident, or somethink, and me never see her no more; but that, if ever she went back to Australia, she'd remember my young man, and get him a good billet. Them were her very words. But, oh, Mr. Granville!—oh, sir!—'

'There, there. Don't turn on the water-works, Bunn. I thought Mrs. Alfred had been cut up about something; but I wasn't sure—that's why I asked *you*, Bunn; though I think, perhaps, you needn't name this conversation either in the servants' hall, or tell anyone else what you have told me. Yes, you may go past now. But—stop a minute, Bunn—here's something else that you needn't name in the servants' hall.'

The something else was a half-sovereign.

'It was worth it, too,' said Granville, when the girl was gone;

'she has given me something to go upon. These half-educated and impulsive people always let out more to their maids than to anyone else.'

He went back to Alfred.

'There was something I forgot to ask you. How much money do you suppose Gladys had about her when she went away?'

'I have no idea,' said Alfred.

'Do you know how much money you have given her since you have been over—roughly?'

'No; I don't know at all.'

'Think, man. Fifty pounds?'

'I should say so. I gave her a note or so whenever it struck me she might want it. She never would ask.'

'Do you think she spent much?'

'I really can't tell you, Gran; perhaps not a great deal, considering everything; for, when I was with her, I never would let her shell out. I never knew of her spending much; but she had it by her, in case she wanted it; and that was all I cared about.'

And that was all Granville cared about. He ceased his questioning; but he was less ready to leave Alfred alone than he had been before. He had found him sitting in the dark by the open window, and staring blankly into the night. Granville had insisted on lighting the gas: only to see how the room was filled with Gladys's things. In every corner of it some woman's trifle breathed of her. Granville felt instinctively that much of this room, in the present suspense, might turn a better brain than Alfred's, in Alfred's position.

'Look here,' said Granville, at last: 'I have been thinking. Listen, Alfred.'

'Well?' said Alfred absently, still leaning and gazing out of window.

'I have got a theory,' went on Granville—'no matter what; only it has nothing to say to death or drowning. It is a hopeful theory. I intend to practise it at once: in a day or two it ought to lead me to absolute certainty of one thing, one way or the other. No matter what that one thing is; I have told you what it is not. Now, I shall have to follow out my idea in town; and if I find the truth at all, I shall most likely come across it suddenly, round a corner as it were. So I have been thinking that you may as well be in town too, to be near at hand in case I

am successful. If you still have a club, you might hang about there, and talk to men, and read the papers; if not—— Why do you shake your head?’

‘I am not going to town any more,’ said Alfred, in low, decided tones. ‘If you are right, and she is not dead, she may come back—she may come back! Then I shall be here to meet her—and—and—— But you understand me, Gran?’

‘Not very well,’ said Granville, drily, and with a shrug of his shoulders that was meant to shift from them all responsibility for Alfred’s possible insanity. ‘In your case I should prefer to be in town rather than here. However, a man judges for himself. There is one thing, however, if you stay here all day——’

‘What’s that?’

‘The question whether you should tell the Judge and the *mater*.’

‘No,’ said Alfred, resolutely; ‘I shall not tell them—not, that is, until the worst is known for certain. They think she is at the Barringtons’. I shall say I have heard from her. I would tell a million lies to save them the tortures of uncertainty that I am suffering, and shall suffer, till—till we know the worst. Oh, Granville!—for God’s sake, find it out quickly!’

‘I’ll do my best—I’ve already told you I would,’ said Granville almost savagely; and he left the room.

Granville’s best, in matters that required a clear head and some little imagination, was always excellent. In the present instance his normal energies were pushed to abnormal lengths by the uncomfortable feeling that he himself had been not unconcerned in bringing about that state of unhappiness which alone could have driven his sister-in-law to do so rash a step; by a feverish desire to atone, if the smallest atonement were possible; and by other considerations, which, for once, were unconnected with the first person singular. Nevertheless, on the Wednesday—the day following the foregoing conversation—he found out nothing at all; and nothing at all on the Thursday. Then Alfred made up his mind that nothing but the very worst could now come to light, and that that was only a question of time; and he fell into an apathy, by day, that Granville’s most vigorous encouragement, in the evening, could do nothing to correct. Thus, when the news did come, when the terrible suspense was suddenly snapped, Alfred was, perhaps, as ill prepared for a shock (though he had expected one for days) as it was possible for a man to be.

It was on the Friday night. Lady Bligh and Sir James were deep in their game of *bézioue*. Alfred sat apart from them, without a hope left in his heart, and marvellously altered in the face. His pallor was terrible, but perhaps natural; but already his cheek-bones, which were high, seemed strangely prominent; and the misery in his large still eyes cried out, as it sometimes does from the eyes of dumb animals in pain. He was conscious of his altered looks, perhaps; for he sedulously avoided looking his parents in the face. They did not know yet. It added to his own anguish to think of the anguish that must come to them too, sooner or later—sooner now—very soon indeed.

The door opened. Granville entered, with a brisk, startling step, and a face lit up—though it was Granville's face—with news.

Alfred saw him—saw his face—and rose unsteadily to his feet.

'Speak! Say you have found her! No—I see it in your face—she is there. Let me come to her!'

As Alfred stepped forward, Granville recoiled, and the light left his face.

Alfred turned to his parents. The Judge had risen, and glanced in mute amazement from one son to the other: both were pale, but their looks told nothing. Lady Bligh sat back in her chair, her smooth face wrinkled with bewilderment and vague terror.

'It is Gladys come back,' said Alfred, in tremulous explanation; 'it is only that Gladys has come back, mother!'

Even then he chuckled in his sleeve to think that they had never known, and never should know, anything of this, the worst of his wife's many and wild escapades.

But Granville recoiled still further, and his face became grey.

'I have not seen her,' he said, solemnly. 'She is *not* here.'

'Not seen her? Not here?' Alfred was quickly sobered. 'But you know where she is? I see it in your face. She is within reach—eh? Come, take me to her!'

'She is not even within reach,' Granville answered, squeezing out the words by a strenuous effort. 'I cannot take you to her. Gladys sailed for Australia last Monday morning!'

Alfred sank heavily into a chair. No one spoke. No one was capable of speech. Before anyone had time to think, Alfred was on his feet again, tottering towards the door.

'I must follow!' he whispered, in hoarse, broken tones. 'I will follow her to-night! Stand aside, Gran; thanks; and God bless you! Good-bye! I shall know where to find her out there. I have no time to stop!'

Granville stood aside in obedience; but for one instant only: the next—he sprang forward to catch in his arms the falling form of Alfred.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BOUNDARY-RIDER OF THE YELKIN PADDOCK.

PICTURE the Great Sahara. The popular impression will do: it has the merit of simplicity: glaring desert, dark-blue sky, vertical sun, and there you are. Omit, for once, the mirage and the thirsty man; but, instead, mix sombre colours and work up the African desert into a fairly desirable piece of Australian sheep-country.

This, too, is a simple matter. You have only to cover the desert with pale-green saliferous bushes, no higher than a man's knee; quite a scanty covering will do, so that in the thickest places plenty of sand may still be seen; and there should be barren patches to represent the low sand-hills and the smooth clay-pans. Then have a line of low-sized dark-green scrub at the horizon; but bite in one gleaming, steely speck upon this sombre rim.

Conceive this modification of the desert, and you have a fair notion of the tract of country—five miles by six—which was known on Bindarra Station as the 'Yelkin Paddock,' the largest paddock in the 'C Block.'

Multiply this area by six; divide and subdivide the product by wire fences, such as those that enclose the Yelkin Paddock; water by means of excavations and wells and whims; stock with the pure merino and devastate with the accursed rabbit; and (without troubling about the homestead, which is some miles north of the Yelkin) you will have as good an idea of the Bindarra 'run,' as a whole, as of its sixth part, the paddock under notice.

The conspicuous mark upon the distant belt of dingy low-sized forest—the object that glitters in the strong sunlight, so that it can be seen across miles and miles of plain—is merely the

galvanised-iron roof of a log-hut, the hut that has been the lodging of the boundary-rider of the Yelkin Paddock ever since the Yelkin Paddock was fenced.

A boundary-rider is not a 'boss' in the Bush, but he is an important personage, in his way. He sees that the sheep in his paddock 'draw' to the water, that there is water for them to draw to, and that the fences and gates are in order. He is paid fairly, and has a fine, free, solitary life. But no boundary-rider had ever stopped long at the Yelkin hut. The solitude was too intense. After a trial of a few weeks—sometimes days—the man invariably rolled up his blankets, walked in to the homestead, said that there was moderation in all things, even in solitude, and demanded his cheque. The longest recorded term of office in the Yelkin Paddock was six months; but that boundary-rider had his reasons: he was wanted by the police. When, after being captured in the hut, this man was tried and hanged for a peculiarly cold-blooded murder, the Yelkin post became even harder to fill than it had been before.

During the Australian summer following that other summer which witnessed the events of the previous chapters, this post was not only filled for many months by the same boundary-rider, but it was better filled than it had ever been before. Moreover, the boundary-rider was thoroughly satisfied, and even anxious to remain. The complete solitude had been far less appreciated by the gentleman with the rope round his neck; for him it had terrors. The present boundary-rider knew no terrors. The solitude was more than acceptable; the Crusoe-like existence was entirely congenial; the level breezy plains, the monotonous procession of brilliant, blazing days, and the life of the saddle and the hut, were little less than delightful, to the new boundary-rider in the Yelkin. They were the few pleasures left in a spoilt life.

There could have been no better cabin for 'a life awry' (not even in the Bush, the living sepulchre of so many such) than the Yelkin hut. But it was not the place to forget in. There are, however, strong natures that can never forget, and still live on. There are still stronger natures that do not seek to forget, yet retain some of the joy of living side by side with the full sorrow of remembrance. The boundary-rider was one of these.

The boundary-rider saw but few faces from the home-station; none from anywhere else. But, one glowing, hot-wind day, early in January, a mounted traveller entered the Yelkin Paddock by

the gate in the south fence. He was following the main track to the homestead, and this track crossed a corner of the Yelkin Paddock, the corner most remote from the hut. He did not seem a stranger, for he glanced but carelessly at the diverging but conterminous wheel-marks which are the puzzling feature of all Bush roads. He was a pallid, gaunt, black-bearded man: so gaunt and so pallid, indeed, that no one would have taken him at the first glance, or at the second either, for Alfred Bligh.

Yet it was Alfred—straight, virtually, from his sick-bed. As soon as he could stand (which was not for weeks) he had been taken on board the steamer. The voyage, it was hoped, would do him good, and he was bent on going—to find his wife. It did not do him much good: the eyes that swept at last the territory of his father-in-law were the sunken, wistful eyes of a shattered man.

Nothing had been heard of Gladys. Granville had written to the station in New South Wales, but there had been no reply. Of this Alfred had not been informed. From the first moments of returning consciousness he had expressed himself strongly against writing at all.

So, as he crossed the corner of the Yelkin Paddock, all he knew was that Gladys had sailed for Australia six months before.

‘If she is here, she is here,’ he muttered a hundred times; ‘and there will have been no warning of my coming to frighten her away. If she is not here—if she were dead——’

His eyes dropped upon the bony hand holding the reins.

‘Well, it would be an easier matter to follow her there than here. It would take less time!’

But, as often as this contingency presented itself, his thin hand involuntarily tightened the reins. Indeed, the nearer he got to the homestead the slower he rode. Many a thousand times he had ridden in fancy this last stage of his long, long journey, and always at a hand-gallop; but, now that he was riding it in fact, he had not the courage to press on. He let his tired horse make the speed, and even that snail’s pace was, at moments, too quick for him.

At the hour wherein he needed his utmost nerve to meet his fate—his nerve, and the stout heart that had brought him, weak as he was, from the opposite end of the earth, were failing him.

The gate in the west fence was in sight, when Alfred, awaking from a fit of absence, became aware that a man with a cylinder of rolled blankets upon his back (his ‘swag’) was tramping along

the track to meet him. For a moment Alfred's heart thumped; he would know his fate now; this man, who was evidently from the home-station, would tell him. Then he recognised the man. It was Daft Larry, the witless stockman, who, being also stone-deaf, was incapable of answering questions.

Larry was a short man, strongly built though elderly, and probably less old than he looked. He had a fresh complexion, a short grey beard, and eyes as blue (and as expressionless) as the flawless southern sky. He recognised Alfred, stood in his path, threw down his swag, put his hands in his pockets, and smiled delightedly; not in surprise; in mere idiotic delight. On beholding Alfred, this had been his invariable behaviour. They had beheld one another last a year ago; but last year and yesterday were much the same date to Larry.

'I like a man that is well-bred!' exclaimed Larry, with a seraphic smile, and his head critically on one side. On beholding Alfred, this had been his invariable formula.

Alfred stopped his horse.

Daft Larry cocked his head on the other side. 'You're not one of the low sort!' he went on.

Alfred smiled.

'*You're* well-bred,' continued Larry, in the tone of a connoisseur. Then, wagging his head gravely: 'I like a man that's not one of the low sort; I like a man that is well-bred!'

That was the end; it always had been. Larry picked up his swag with the air of a man who has proved his case.

Alfred had ridden on some yards, when a call from the idiot made him stop.

'Look there!' shouted Larry, with an ungainly sweep of the arm. 'Dust-storm coming up—bad dust-storm. Don't get caught, mister—you aren't one of the low sort, not you!'

Daft Larry had been known to give gratuitous information before, though he could not answer questions. Alfred, instead of riding on, now looked about him. There was sense enough in the warning (though Larry, apparently, did not mind being 'caught' himself, since he was plodding steadily on, leaving the station, probably for good, as he periodically did leave it). There was every indication of a dust-storm, though the sun still shone brilliantly. The hot-wind had become wild and rampant. It was whipping up the sandy coating of the plain in every direction. High in the air were seen whirling spires and cones of

sand—a curious effect against the deep-blue sky. Below, puffs of sand were breaking out of the plain in every direction, as though the plain were alive with invisible horsemen. These sandy cloudlets were instantly dissipated by the wind; it was the larger clouds that were lifted whole into the air, and the larger clouds of sand were becoming more and more the rule.

Alfred's eye, quickly scanning the horizon, descried the roof of the boundary-rider's hut still gleaming in the sunlight. He remembered the hut well. It could not be farther than four miles, if as much as that, from this point of the track; but it was twelve miles at least from this to the homestead. He also knew these dust-storms of old; Bindarra was notorious for them. Without thinking twice, Alfred put spurs to his horse and headed for the hut. Before he had ridden half the distance, the detached clouds of sand banded together in one dense whirlwind; and it was only owing to his horse's instinct that he did not ride wide of the hut altogether; for, during the last half-mile, he never saw the hut until its outline loomed suddenly over his horse's ears; and by then the sun was invisible.

'I never saw one come on quicker!' gasped Alfred, as he jumped off and tethered his quivering horse in the lee of the hut.

The excitement, and the gallop, had made Alfred's blood tingle in his veins. It was a novel sensation. He stepped briskly into the hut.

Almost his first sight on entering was the reflection of his own face in a mirror, neatly nailed to the wall, close to the door. Alfred had never been vain, but he did pause to gaze at himself then; for his face was covered with a thin veneer of sand, as a wall becomes coated with driven snow. He dashed off the sand, and smiled; and for the moment, with some colour in his cheeks and a new light in his eyes, Alfred scarcely knew himself. Then he turned his back upon the glass, merely noting that it was a queer thing to find in a boundary-rider's hut, and that it had not been there a year ago.

The door had been ajar, and the window was blocked up. The sand, however, had found a free entry through the crevices between the ill-fitting pine-logs of the walls, and already the yellow coating lay an eighth of an inch thick all over the boarded floor and upon the rude bench and table.

Alfred sat down and watched the whirling sand outside slowly deepen in tint. He had left the door open, because otherwise the

interior of the hut would have been in complete darkness. As it was, it was difficult to distinguish objects; but Alfred, glancing round, was struck with the scrupulous tidiness of everything.

'Ration-bags all hung up; nothing left about; fireplace cleaned out—daily, I should say; pannikins bright as silver; bunk made up. All this is most irregular!' exclaimed Alfred. 'This boundary-rider must be a curiosity. I never saw anything half so neat during all the months I was in the Bush before. One might almost suspect a woman's hand in it—especially in that mirror. Which reminds me, Gladys told me she was once out here for a week, alone, riding the boundaries, when they were short-handed. My darling! What nerve! Would to Heaven you had had less nerve!'

The thick sand rattled in continuous assault upon the iron roof. It was becoming a difficult matter to see across the hut. But the storm, and the gallop, had had a curiously exhilarating effect upon Alfred. His spirits had risen.

'I wish that boundary-rider would come in; but the storm's bound to fetch him. I want a pannikin of tea badly, to lay the dust inside; there's as much there as there was outside, I'll be bound. Besides, he will have news for me. Poor Larry!—the same old drivel! And to think that I was something like that in my delirium—that I might have been left like Larry!'

His attention was here attracted by the illustrated prints pasted upon a strip of sackcloth nailed to the pine-logs over the bunk: a feature, this, of every bushman's hut. He went over to look at them, and, the better to do so, leant with one knee upon the bed—the rudely-framed bed that was so wonderfully well 'made.'

'Ah!' remarked Alfred, 'some of them are the old lot; I remember them. But some are new, and—why, that's a cabinet photograph down there by the pillow; and'—bending down to examine it—'good heavens! it's of *me*!'

It was a fact. The photograph was an extremely life-like one of Alfred Bligh. But how had it got there? Of what interest or value could it be to the boundary-rider of the Yelkin Paddock? It had been taken last summer, at Richmond; and—oh, yes, he remembered now—Gladys had sent one out to her father. That was it, of course. The boundary-man had found it lying about the verandah or the yard at the homestead (Alfred knew his father-in-law), and had rescued it for the wall of his hut. No

matter (to the boundary-man) who it was, it was a picture, and one that would rather set off the strip of sackcloth. That was it, of course; a simple explanation.

Yet Alfred trembled. The photograph was in a far from conspicuous position; nor did it look as if it had been left lying about. What if it belonged to Gladys? What if Gladys had fastened it there with her own hands? What if she came sometimes to the hut—this hut in which he stood? What if she had spent another week here riding the boundaries, when her father was 'hard up' for men?

All at once he felt very near to her; and the feeling made him dizzy. His eyes roved once again round the place, noting the abnormal neatness and order that had struck him at first; a look of wild inquiry came into his haggard face; and even then, as the agony of surmise tightened every nerve—a sound broke plainly upon his ears. It was heard above the tinkle of the sand upon the roof: a horse's canter, muffled in the heavy sand outside.

Alfred sprang to the door. At the same instant a rider drew rein in front of him. They were not five paces apart; but such was the density of the flying sand and dust that he could see no more than the faint outline of the horse and its rider. Then the rider leapt lightly to the ground. It was the boundary-rider of the Yelkin Paddock; but the boundary-rider was a woman.

Alfred reeled forward, and clasped her to his heart.

'Gladdie! Darling!'

He had found her.

CHAPTER XIX.

ANOTHER LETTER FROM ALFRED.

'Bindarra Station, N.S.W.,

'April 3.

'DEAREST MOTHER,—Your dear letter, in answer to my first, written in January, has just reached me. Though I wrote so fully last mail, I can't let a mail go without some sort of an answer. But, as a matter of fact, I am in a regular old hurry. The mail-boy is waiting impatiently in the verandah, with his horse 'hung up' to one of the posts; and the store-keeper is waiting in the store to drop my letter in the bag and seal it up.

So I must be short. Even with lots of time, however, you know I never could write stylish, graphic letters like Gran can. So you must make double allowances for me.

‘And now, dear mother, about our coming back to England; and what you propose; and what you say about my darling. To take the best first—God bless you for your loving words! I can say nothing else. Yes, I knew you were getting to love her in spite of all her waywardness; and I know—I *know*—that you would love her still. And you would love her none the less for all that has happened; you would remember what I explained in my first letter, that it was *for my sake*; you would think no longer of what she did, but why she did it.

‘But, about coming back, we have, as you already know, made up our minds to live out our lives here in Australia. After all, it’s a far better country—a bigger and a better Britain. There is no poverty here, or very little; you never get stuck up for coppers in the streets of the towns; or, if you do, it’s generally by a newly-landed immigrant who hasn’t had time to get out of bad old habits. There’s more room for everybody than at home, and fairer rations of cakes and ale all round. Then there’s very little ill-health, because the climate is simply perfect—which reminds me that I am *quite* well now—have put on nearly two stone since I landed! But all this about Australia’s beside the mark: the real point is that it suits Gladdie and me better than any other country in the world.

‘Now for some news. We have decided upon our station at last. It is the one in Victoria, in the north-eastern district—— I think I mentioned it among the “probables” in my last. It is not large as stations go; but “down in Vic” you can carry as many sheep to the acre as acres to the sheep up here in the “back-blocks.” You see, it is a grass country. But the scenery is splendid: great rugged ranges covered with the typical gum-trees, of which there are none up here, and a fine creek clean through the middle of the “run.” Then there are parrots and ‘possums and native bears all over the place, none of which you get up here, though I fear there will be more snakes too. The only drawback is the “cockatoos.” I don’t mean the *bird*, dear mother, but the “cockatoo selectors.” Personally, I don’t think these gentry are the vermin my father-in-law makes them out to be; *he* brackets them with the rabbits; but I mean to make friends with them—if I can. The homestead is delightful: good rooms, and

broad verandah round three sides. We are going to be absurdly happy there.

'We shall not take possession though till after shearing—i.e. in your autumn, though the agreement is signed and everything arranged. Meanwhile, we shall stay on here, and I am to get a little more Colonial experience. I need it badly, but not perhaps so badly as my father-in-law makes out. He ridiculed the idea of my turning squatter on my own account, unless Gladys was "boss." But, now that we have fixed on the Victorian station, he is a bit more encouraging. He says any fool could make *that* country pay, referring of course to the rainfall, which just there, in the ranges, is one of the best in Australia. Still, he is right: experience *is* everything in the Colonies.

'So I am not quite idle. All day I am riding or driving about the "run," seeing after things, and keeping my eyes open. In the evenings Gladdie and I have taken to reading together. This was her doing, not mine, mind; though I won't yield to her in my liking of it. The worst of it is, it's so difficult to know where to begin; I am so painfully ignorant. Can *you* not help us, dear mother? Do!—and when we come home some day (just for a trip) you will find us both such reformed and enlightened members of society!

'But, long before that, *you* must come out and see *us*. Don't shake your head. *You simply must*. England and Australia are getting nearer and nearer every year. The world's wearing small, like one of those round balls of soap, between the hands of Time—(a gem in the rough this, for Gran to polish and set!) Why, there's a Queensland squatter who for years has gone "home" for the hunting season; while, on the other hand, Australia is becoming *the* crack place to winter in.

Now, as you, dear mother, always *do* winter abroad, why not here as well as anywhere else? You must! You shall! If not next winter, then the following one; and if the Judge cannot bring you, then Gran must. That reminds me: how are they both? And has Gran been writing anything specially trenchant lately? I'm afraid I don't appreciate very 'cutely—"miss half the 'touches," he used to tell me (though I think I have made him a present of a "touch" to-day). But you know how glad we would both be to read some of his things; so *you* might send one sometimes, dear mother, without him knowing. For we owe him so much! And, besides what he did for me afterwards, he

was always so nice and brotherly with Gladys. I know she thought so at the time, though she doesn't speak about him much now. *You're* the one she thinks of most, dearest mother; you're her model and her pattern for life!

'The mail-boy has begun to remonstrate. He'll have to gallop the whole way to the "jolly" township, he says, if I am not quick. So I must break off; but I will answer your dear letter more fully next mail, or, better still, Gladdie shall write herself. Till then, good-bye, and dearest love from us both.

'Ever your affectionate son,

'ALFRED.

'*P.S.*—Gladys has read the above: so one last word on the sly.

'Oh, mother, if you only saw her at this moment! She is sitting in the verandah—I can just see her through the door. She's in one of those long deck-chairs with a book, though she seems to have tired of reading. I can't see much of her face, but only the sweep of her cheek, and the lashes of one lid, and her little ear. But I can see she isn't reading—she's threading her way through the pines into space somewhere—perhaps back to Twickenham, who knows? And she's wearing a white dress; you would like it—it's plain. And her cheek is quite brown; you'll remember how it was the day she landed from the launch. But there! I can't describe like Gran, so it's no good trying. Only I do know this: I simply love her more and more and more, and a million times more for all that has happened. And you, and all of you, and all your friends, would fairly worship her now. You couldn't help it!'

THE END.

